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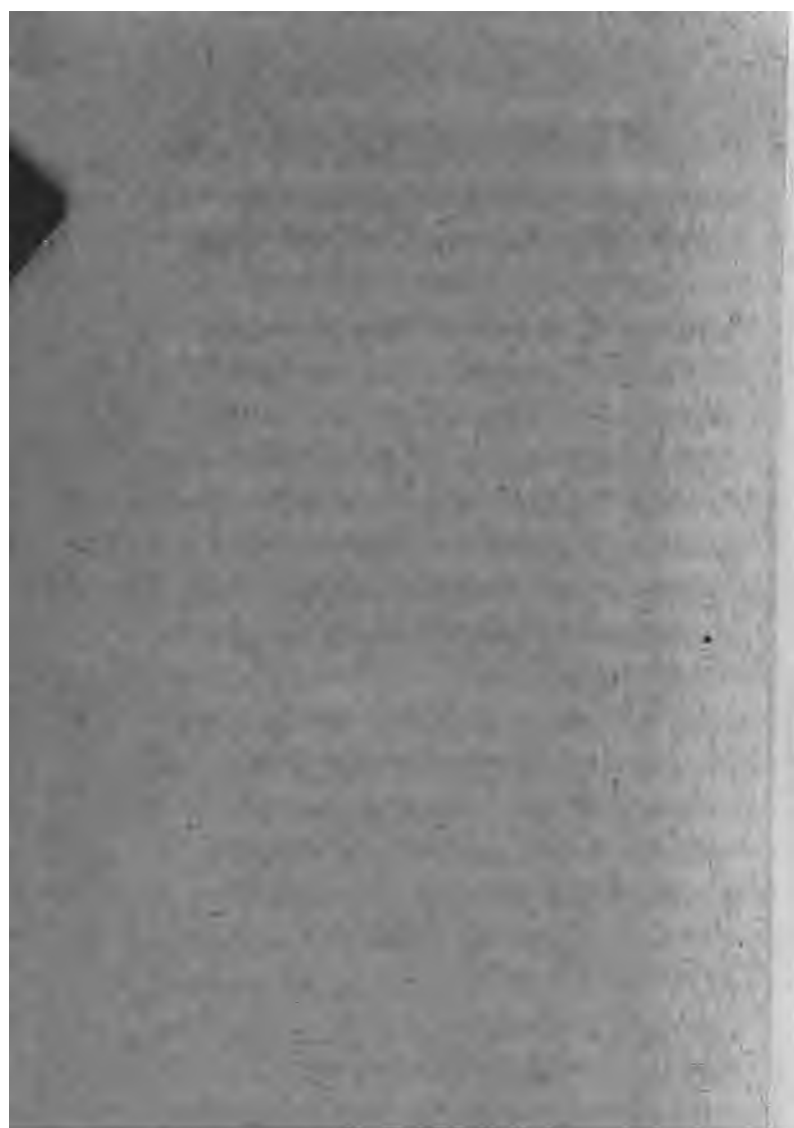
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3 Novel.



BY

HENRY KINGSLEY.

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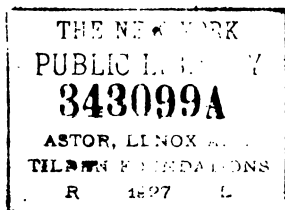
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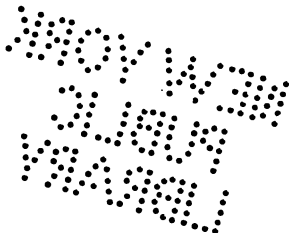
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MADemoisELLE MATHILDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP ARE
BROKEN UP.

M. D'ISIGNY, having left Sir Lionel Somers, after the grand explanation, came quietly home, got William the Silent to get him his valise packed secretly, while he waited in the stable,—took his horse, and rode off across the downs to Lulworth: as he said, “to get his ideas together without any more discussion;” in reality, because he wanted to avoid any more scenes, and because the Welds had a very pleasant accidental French party there, and had asked him to join them, if it was in any way possible.

His hosts were so very charming that he was really in no hurry to return. He had to tell them of the breaking off of the engagement between Sir

Lionel Somers and his daughter. They were so gently regretful over the matter, and showed such perfect, kindly tact, that he was at home at once, and enjoyed himself so much among the three or four compatriots of his who were staying at the Castle; that Sheepsden, with a weeping Adèle, a downright father confessor, and a wondering and possibly scandalised, certainly inquisitive, neighbourhood, seemed to him by no means a change for the better. He had never allowed any human soul to raise the least question about his times or his places. He was comfortably assured that his family had not the least idea where he was. He knew perfectly well that Father Martin and Mathilde would think that he had followed Louis de Valognes to France, after the interview with Sir Lionel Somers, with the view of shooting that unfortunate Louis; and would be in a state of miserable, feverish anxiety. Consequently, M. D'Isigny enjoyed himself thoroughly and entirely, and made himself so wondrously agreeable, that his compatriots, some old French Catholic aristocrats, agreed that there was nothing like a real French gentleman after all, and what a pity it was that D'Isigny

was ever so slightly tainted with the new opinions. D'Isigny, between one thing and another, enjoyed himself thoroughly, and stayed on.

On the fifth day of his stay the weather, wild, dark, and dim ever since his arrival at Lulworth, was darker and wilder than ever, rushing into the cove from the westward with sheets of wind-driven rain, and making the yacht, lying snug, with top-masts sent down, surge at her anchors. M. D'Isigny said he must ride homewards. A bright boy of nine, looking out into the weather, told him that he was much better where he was; for that there was plenty more weather coming, and that he was going on board the yacht, as soon as the sailing-master was ready, to see to her moorings.

"Joseph is right," said the charming old Madame Mautalent, close to him. "It is impossible to start in such weather. The English St. Swithin, who guides the English weather, is against you. Since his day, the weather has broken up as usual."

"He was impatient this year, madame," said a bowing and smirking abbé, joining them, snuff-box in hand. "The saint had evidently heard of madame's intention of departure on the fifteenth, and

antedated the weather in order that madame might wait for a pleasant passage. The weather changed on his vigil. On the night of the fourteenth the fountains of the great deep were broken up."

True, oh, Abbé! in a way you little dreamed. But what between madame's charming nonsense and the abbé's charming nonsense, D'Isigny felt less and less inclined to go back to his dull house, and his weeping daughters. Nevertheless, the weather having mended on the eighth day, he condescended to ride quietly into his own court-yard and dismount.

"You have not been out of England, then?" was Father Martin's greeting.

"No, I have been at Lulworth. Where are my daughters?"

"Adèle is very ill, and Mathilde is, of course, watching her. That matters nothing. Had they heard the news at Lulworth?"

"What news?"

"Lionel Somers got it first from his friend Mr. Jenkinson, who saw it happen. It has come by Havre and Southampton. The mob have risen, and have taken and sacked the Bastille, and murdered the garrison."

"In-deed!" said D'Isigny. "So the game has actually begun. I suppose, then, that I had better go to Paris at once?"

"Why not to Dinan?"

"I would rather be at head-quarters, and study things. I think I will go to Paris at once. There is another thing: you tell me that Adèle is ill. As soon as she is well enough to be removed, will you take her to Dinort for me?"

"Certainly; and Mathilde?"

"Will do very well here. Things will manage themselves here. It is impossible, after what has happened, that Adèle can stay here. No, my dear friend, take her to Dinort for me. I will start for Southampton to-night."

"That is short notice," said Father Martin.

"One cannot be on the spot too soon," said M. D'Isigny.

"Doubtless," said Father Martin. "I want a word before you go."

"I will write."

"I *said* a word before you went, and that would be a letter after you had gone. Quite a different matter. Here it is. Is Louis de Valognes forgiven?"

"No," said M. D'Isigny.

"I think yes."

"I think no."

"Again I think yes. Come, I must have this done. You will do it, will you not?"

"He has behaved dishonourably to me, and has insulted me."

"Granting that, you might yet forgive him. I am not curious; but I *should* like to know how you got over your business with Sir Lionel."

M. D'Isigny gave him an account of the whole interview; and Father Martin patted him on the shoulder. "I knew," he said, "that no harm could come of two perfect gentlemen and good Christians meeting and explaining matters. I am sorry I advised you to write to him; I was silly there. You did right in going so nobly, and explaining matters to him face to face. Your wisdom was far higher than mine."

"And then?" said D'Isigny.

"And then," pursued Father Martin, "you, as a Frenchman, would never allow yourself to be outdone in generosity by an Englishman. Sir Lionel has forgiven Louis; and his injury is greater than yours."

"Well," said D'Isigny, laughing, "you have stroked the cat the right way, and I will agree. You priests have just the same trick as women. You flatter us ; and while we see through and often despise your insincerity, we yield to you for the sake of peace. Louis may go to the devil his own way, and I will do nothing to send him there. I concede so much."

He departed that night, without bidding good-bye to his daughters. His heavy luggage was to follow him to Southampton, and he rode away with only his valise, to be in time to get his papers—a thing, I believe, not as yet difficult. Father Martin watched him as he stepped the downs against the gray, rainy sky and said,—

"Why he is going to Paris, and what on earth he means to do when he gets there, I know as little as he does himself. There is one thing most certain: he will begin by laying his life and his purse at the service of the King, and will then bully and dictate to every one else who has done the same, until they will, like Adèle, 'wish they were dead.' He will probably point out to the King himself the course which he wishes him to pursue."

Yes; and the King will say, 'You seem to me to be a very sensible man, monsieur.' And then ask after his wife. Well, I congratulate Paris on the accession of the most impracticable firebrand I have ever met in my life."

He passed into the hall-kitchen, and went behind the screen, pondering deeply. Mathilde happened to be there, and he, in an absent way, and to her great astonishment, took up the thread of his thoughts aloud, and addressed them to her.

"He will insult Lafayette about the American business. He has sworn to me that nothing shall ever induce him to speak of Mirabeau; he has vowed to me that he will not go on whenever he meets him. For the rest, ~~he will~~ ^{he will} insult and denounce them, even if his head is lost in what is coming, his is the head which will go. He denounces the aristocracy and denounces Mirabeau as a disgrace to his order at one and the same time. In short, he belongs to the party 'D'Isigny,' which consists of himself; and every other party are a congerie of rogues and vagabonds. He will lose his head, whichever party wins."

But he kept it on his shoulders nevertheless, while heads not half so deeply implicated as his fell like wheat-ears in harvest.

Mathilde looked quietly up at him. "You were talking to yourself," she said. "Is anything wrong which I can mend? Who is going to lose his head?"

"Your father, Mathilde. He will lose his head among these politics as surely as I have lost mine in thinking of them."

"He has lost his head among them already," said Mathilde, smiling. "I am to help him at something some day he says, at peril of my life. But I do not understand what he means, and I do not think that," he added. "All this trouble will blow over, my dear."

"Yes, it will blow over," said Father Martin, as they looked out of the window over the rich corn-fields in the valley. "It will all blow over, as this storm has blown over. See, there is a red arch of light in the west, which rises and gets more glorious each moment."

"The west wind and rain have 'laid' the wheat," said matter-of-fact Mathilde. "It will not get up

again before harvest. The storm has gone over, but the wheat is destroyed."

"Yet the wheat will grow as well as ever next year," said Father Martin.

"But not in those fields," said Mathilde, simply. "There will be barley there next year, and then clover, and then turnips, and wheat again only in four years."

"But there will be wheat again at last. Let us change the subject. You are speaking in all simplicity; yet, by accident, your words are painful to me. One is so blind, and one has to look forward so very, very far."

"To what?" asked Mathilde.

"To harvest, child. ~~The grain~~ has gone to Paris, by-the-by, and ~~commis- sion- ed~~ him to bid you adieu."

This changed the subject with a vengeance. It took away Mathilde's breath, and enabled Father Martin to continue his explanations without any "interpellations."

"It is absolutely necessary, you see," said Father Martin, "that Adèle should leave this part of the country; and it is quite impossible that she should

travel alone. Consequently, your father and I have arranged that I should take her to her grand-aunt at Dinort, as soon as she is well enough to move. The sooner the better."

"She can go well enough now, if you like," said Mathilde. "I think she would be better there than here. But *you* will come back again, and not leave me entirely alone?"

"Oh, yes; I will come back again. Do you really think she *can* be moved?"

"It will do her all the good in the world," said Mathilde. "But I could take her there as well as you. Why should not I take her?"

"Because your father has ordered otherwise; and because," he added, speaking very slowly, "Louis' regiment is still quartered at St. Malo, which is very close."

"Are they to marry, then?" asked Mathilde, in a whisper.

"I think so," said Father Martin, also in a whisper.

For one of the few times in this story she burst out into wild weeping. He let her weep. He had nothing to say to comfort her, and he held his

tongue. "God knows best," he thought; "I shall not interfere with her. Let her cry till she is quiet."

It was not long before she was quiet. He waited until her sobs grew less and less frequent, and at last became mere sighs. Then he spoke to her.

"Are you quite ready to speak to me about arrangements?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Good; will you then arouse yourself? Tell Adèle of her destination. Prepare her mind for immediate departure. Get her to submit decently to the plan. Pack her things for her; for, I fear, she will never pack them for herself. And if you have any difficulty in gaining her acquiescence, tell her that Louis is at St. Malo, and that she will see him very often. She will go fast enough then. Will you obey?"

"I will obey," said Mathilde. "I always do. But *you* surely might hold out the attraction of Louis de Valognes before her. That is rather a bitter pill for me to swallow, advertising him to her after what has passed."

"It will do you good," said Father Martin.

"Louis has grossly deceived you. Show him that you despise him, and hate him."

"But I don't," said Mathilde.

"Make believe that you do. Show your spirit. Say 'You want her, hey? Then take her!' Show your courage."

"I have none," said Mathilde. "I am the greatest coward in the world. But I will do as you say. And what is to become of me? Am I to be left here all alone?"

"Certainly you are. You will have to manage matters here. You are, allow me to tell you, more lucky than the rest of the family. You do not know what has happened. While you and I were decorating the chapel on St. Swithin's eve, the people of Paris having succeeded—how I cannot conceive—in capturing the Bastille, were amusing themselves by massacreing De Launay and the garrison."

"Have they destroyed the Bastille?" said Mathilde, with sudden animation. "Why did you not tell me of that before? Thank God! there is life in old France yet. And so there is a God which judges the world. I thought He was dead, or

asleep like Baal. So the wicked old place is down. I wish I had been there : this is very glorious news, indeed."

"My daughter, do you not think of De Launay and the garrison?"

"What of them?"

"Murdered!"

"I am sorry for that—that was a mistake. I think I could have saved them, had I been there with a strange friend of mine. I am very sorry for that. But, then, they were maddened, you know. Naturally, no people in the world are so kind as the French—they will regret this. I wish that my friend Marat had been there; he would have prevented this."

"Mathilde," said Father Martin, "you should never name that man. It is inconceivably horrible to me to hear you call that man your friend. I am seldom angry, but I am angry now. This Marat is the most inconceivable scoundrel in all France. Since the days of the Old Man of the Mountain no such villain has appeared on this earth. I thank God that he is not a Frenchman, but a Swiss! And you call him friend!"

“If you are angry I will say no more, of course. I liked him because he loved the poor. He was odd, and I am also very odd. I am sorry that he is proved to be wicked. I think that in future some one should tell me whom I am to like, and whom I am to dislike. I want guidance sadly.”

“I think you do.”

“Well, I will be amenable to it. I am to stay here, all alone, and manage matters?”

“That is what we wish you to do.”

“Then, of course, I will do it.”

CHAPTER II.

SIR LIONEL COMES TO SHEEPSDEN.

THERE was but little summer that year. No-thing but wild, sweeping, westerly rains, folding Sheepsden in the mist of the low carrying cloud, and rushing among the elms about the house, and moaning in the fir-trees aloft on the summit of the down. A wild and melancholy season, only made more melancholy and more tragical by the news from France, which got more and more lamentable as time went on! Mathilde had to pass this time alone at Sheepsden, with no other domestic company than Mrs. Bone and William the Silent; for Father Martin and Adèle were away to Dinort.

She heard of them now and then. Madame D'Isigny of St. Catherine's, with whom Adèle was staying, was lady visitor of La Garaye, and used to

go once a month to see how the blind and the imbecile were getting on there. Adèle wrote to her that these monthly inspections of the hospital of La Garaye were the pleasantest days she had; and adding that her aunt, the Abbess of St. Catherine's, was wonderfully well qualified for her office of inspector of the "aveugles" and "imbéciles," seeing that she was more than half blind and utterly imbecile herself. Adèle did not add the fact that Louis de Valognes always met them at these gatherings, but Father Martin did; and Mathilde fully understood that the match between De Valognes and Adèle was merely a thing of time. So when she actually heard that it had taken place, she was not so very much put out; for—well, she had got some good advice, other than Father Martin's, before the marriage took place.

Things seemed to be going on pretty comfortably at St. Malo, Dinort, and La Garaye; things, however, were not quite so comfortable at Dinan. We will get through our friend Mathilde's correspondence in these few months before we begin with her life during that time. She got one letter, spotted with tears, from Adèle, in which that young lady

began, as usual, by wishing she had never been born, and ended by wishing that she was dead. These were the only two coherent propositions in the whole letter. The middle and incoherent part of it was taken up with vague denunciations of her mother, Madame of Dinan, and of Mathilde herself. Mathilde was very much puzzled, and wondered what she *could* have done, but was somewhat enlightened by the letter of Father Martin which came by the same post. It appeared that Madame the Lady Abbess of St. Catherine's had been holding her monthly inspection in the garden of La Garaye (a fête, I suspect, very similar to our present school fêtes, though without croquet), when Madame D'Isigny, the terrible Lady of Dinan, had appeared, and had, as Father Martin put it, "conducted herself as usual." She had, it appeared, used those great powers of objurgation alluded to by old Lady Somers, with such remarkable force and dexterity, that she had left every woman on the ground in tears, except Adèle, the principal victim, who was in hysterics. Madame D'Isigny, it seemed, had used such dreadful language to her daughter Adèle, about her desertion of a real man

like Sir Lionel Somers, for a miserable creature like De Valognes (who was present); had scolded also so fearfully about her husband's political tergiversation; about the Lady Abbess of St. Catherine's trying to make up her quarrel about the *corvée* with the future Marquis de Valognes; about the shameful way in which Mathilde had been treated by that future Marquis, bosom-friend of the double-dyed La Fayetteist, André Desilles; that Adèle had been carried into the hospital of La Garaye in a swoon. After which Madame of Dinan had gone back to Dinan triumphant.

After this plain proof that her dear mother's temper was by no means improving, Mathilde came to the conclusion that she was just as well where she was. Still it was dull for many reasons. Her relations with William, the servant, and Mrs. Bone, the housekeeper, were as pleasant as ever. She was very fond of them, and they loved her. All that was well. These three had to consult every morning about the farm, about the household expenses, about the horses, about the fowls, and after the consultation she gave her orders, which they obeyed with good will and diligence. As being a

thing of the past, as being a thing which will never be seen again, this diligent, trustful, affectionate obedience after consultation is worthy of notice, just in passing. However, she got things *done*, which is more than we can do now; and so found that she, with two common, honest souls to help her, could make the microcosm of Sheepsden spin on better than ever.

But it was dull. William and Mrs. Bone were not "company." She found that out in the first fortnight. Their talk was, first, about the scandals among the gentry, which she always stopped at once; second, about the scandals among the farmers and lower classes, which she stopped also; and thirdly, about agricultural prospects and the health of horses, which she let go on, but which bored her. It was very dull for her, and it rained so persistently, that her precious red umbrella seemed to be a part of herself; and having borrowed Mrs. Bone's English Bible, she read the account of Noah's flood with dismay.

She knew that she was doing wrong in reading this Bible of Mrs. Bone's. She was perfectly aware that Father Martin would be angry with her for

doing so. But she was bored, and she read it. She could confess and have absolution for having done so hereafter. She may be excused for such a sin, considering how dull it was for her, and that she had no spiritual director.

She read it with a hungry soul, and put her old book aside; for here, in this forbidden Bible she found every phase of her soul satisfied. "Why have they kept it from me?" she said; and there was no answer.

Dull, very dull, at Sheepsden; long days spent on the farm and among the poor; long evenings with Mrs. Bone and William. Mathilde was a thorough *radical*. She had absolutely no class prejudices whatever. She would as soon sit with a rheumatic old woman as she would with a duchess. She began to sit with the old women and gossip with them. And her Catholic language was half forgotten, and some of the poor whom she habitually relieved and attended to were Wesleyans and Independents; and after a very short time it seemed to her that their formulas were nearly as attractive, nearly as spiritual as her own, and moreover that they were wonderfully similar.

The necessity for public worship which had lain dormant so long, but had been aroused again by the ministrations of Father Martin, was very strongly felt by her. Still she had a dislike to appear at the church where she would be seen by people in her own rank of life, and set down as a renegade. She spent her first Sunday or two of freedom among the fields.

It was on a very wet Sunday when she wandered solitary among the lonely lanes, in one of the remotest of them—one which was deeply shadowed by over-arching elms, deeply rutted with the winter's rains, and which ended in the sudden, abrupt down. She had just made up her mind to climb the down, and enjoy herself three hundred feet aloft, alone among the driving mist, when she paused and listened with eager curiosity.

It was the sound of many voices singing a hymn to a simple and easy, yet bold and majestic tune. They sang the first verse, as she listened, and there was silence; then they took up the harmony again with still more strength, precision, and simplicity. Not only was the effect of the music itself inexpressibly fine, with the adjuncts of wild weather and

solitude; but the words of the hymn, touched, with a hand quite uncultivated, on the highest and deepest spiritual questions—the immortality of the soul and the ultimate mercy of the Deity. Rude as the words were, they were purely religious; that is to say, they involved humble inquiry of God for something more than He has revealed, which is the basis of all the higher forms of religion. I should say that even a really thoughtful Roman Catholic * would not deny this position.

Thou wilt not leave my soul
To perish in the dust;
It lives in thy control,
Thou canst not be unjust.

The more my spirit sees
Of Thee and of Thy ways,
The more my soul agrees
To sing Thee songs of praise.

Do with me as Thou wilt,
I trust alone in Thee;
Thou knowest all my guilt,
Yet Thou wilt pardon me.

She was aroused, interested, nay, almost excited. She had read and loved legends of travelling knights

* I should hope not the author of "Lead, kindly light."

in their adventures coming on secret romantic little chapels, where a few monks, in the midst of the lonely woods and the wintry weather, were singing God's praises amidst the surrounding desolation; and she had read of, and, radical as she was, had loved and admired the Scottish Cameronians, singing their wild hymns in unison, beneath the solemn crags of Wardlaw and Cairntable, until the melody was extinguished amidst the shattering fire of Claverhouse's carbines. Somehow she seemed to have found in her lonely summer ramble some adventure of this kind; for she was of that romantic nature from which come our martyrs, and she went on with her adventure.

Just round the end of the lane she found a little chapel, from which the singing came. Without thinking for one instant of her duty as a Catholic, or of what Father Martin would say, she quietly passed inside the doorway, just as the singing ended, and sat down.

No one seemed to notice her, though there were many there whom she knew. As she passed in, with the instinct of many years, she looked to the right for the stoup, but seeing nothing but an alms

box, only crossed herself, and bowed her knee slightly. The moment afterwards she remembered that she was among extreme Protestants, and had given offence; but she sat down, and no one seemed to see her.

The minister of this little tabernacle among the English hills was a very young man, dark, attractive, fanatical in appearance, but of extraordinary beauty, and evidently not long for this world. The large bold eyes, the sunken face, the prominent nose, the thin lips, and the melancholy expression of his whole face, told of consumption. She saw before her, in that young man, the highest type of the saints of her own Church; and while she looked on him, pitied him, he began to pray extempore.

And his prayer took this form: it was an address to his congregation about the infinite mercy and goodness of God. There was very little direct petition whatever. It seemed as though he merely wished to put the great goodness of God before his congregation. The only direct petition came at the end of the prayer, and Mathilde knew that it alluded to her. Here this young man made a

direct personal appeal to the Deity, "Other sheep you have not of this fold, whose good works and whose labours of love we have known. In Thy hands we leave them. Grant, then, that we may sit with them in Thy kingdom." And all the simple folks said, "Amen," for she was well known among them.

Then he preached, but not at Mathilde the Papist. She was utterly beneath him now. His text was the casting down of the golden crowns; and believing in his inmost soul that his own glory was near at hand, he soared away into an atmosphere almost as high as St. John's. Under the spell of his rude eloquence, these starved and storm-beaten Dorsetshire hinds became kings and princes, with an inheritance, after death, grander, infinitely grander and more glorious than Hapsburgh, Hohenzollern, or Hanover dared dream of. And you wonder at the power of these men! Mathilde by degrees raised her head, and watched his face; but she was nothing to him. She believed, as all Catholics do, every word that he said; and she was forced to confess that she had never heard a grander sermon. Every word of it suited

her. She seemed as he went on to be rising into a clearer atmosphere every moment; every sentence roused her to the contemplation of some noble deed. But at his peroration she bowed down her head and wept.

“My time is short with you. I am going, in a very short time, to this unutterable glory of which I have been speaking. And you will weep and lament for me. Why for *me*! I can understand your weeping for yourselves; but I am at a loss to conceive why you should weep for me in glory. Yet I could weep myself even in glory, for my faith is not perfect. Tears will be wiped away from all eyes I *know*, yet see what an imperfect worm I am. I will lay my poor soul bare before you. I find no assurance in the Book that those who have loved on this earth will meet again. And without the wife of my bosom, what will glory be to me? Yet I trust. Yet I trust.”

Mathilde being next the door, was forced of course to go out first, which she did with her head bent modestly. Some one's hand, the hand of some one who stood before her and opposed her passage, was laid on her shoulder, and she

looked up into the frank genial face of Sir Lionel Somers.

“Oh, dear!” she said eagerly, and quickly in French, “I am so very glad to see you. I am so very lonely. However did you come here?”

“I followed you. I came to see you at Sheepsheden, and got your general route; asking such few as were about, I followed you, never dreaming that you could be in the Dissenting Chapel.”

“I suppose that I have done very wrong,” said Mathilde, “but I must complete my crime. There stands the minister, and I must go and thank him.”

“I will introduce you,” said Sir Lionel. “He is an old friend of mine.”

The young man was standing on one side with his young bride, for, like most other pure and enthusiastic young men, he had married young. The wife was a gentle, pretty-looking, delicate creature, and was looking anxiously up into her husband's face, which, now the excitement of preaching was over, was ghastly and wan, but very handsome. Sir Lionel took Mathilde up to them, and said,—

“Evans, let me introduce a young French lady of the high nobility, who wishes to thank you for your sermon.”

“I know mademoiselle very well,” he said very respectfully. “I, though coming from a little distance, have known of mademoiselle’s good works, and her labours in the Lord.”

“You made me weep profoundly, monsieur,” said Mathilde in a downright manner. “And I am grateful to you. I am hard-hearted, and not easily moved to tears. Will you allow me to shake hands with you?”

But to her surprise and Sir Lionel’s, Mr. Evans hung back and hesitated. They thought that it was because she was a Roman Catholic, until he stammered out.

“I beg your pardon, Sir Lionel; but I think I should wish you to explain to mademoiselle that I—I am only a common village shoemaker, and that I return to my bench to-morrow. I doubt,” he added, again hesitating, and in perfect humble simplicity, “that her ladyship does not understand that.”

“Why, then, this,” said Mathilde, brightening

up, "is more beautiful than all. This brings us back to the time when there were no trained priests at all, and they were all carpenters, fishermen, and tentmakers. I am backsliding more and more," she said, smiling on Sir Lionel. "All this will go to Father Martin, and my penances will be terrible. Now, sir, will you shake hands?"

When they had all four done so, and were at ease among one another, Sir Lionel asked Evans which way he was going.

"I preach at Pimperne to-night, Sir Lionel; and walk back over the Down afterwards. I have a very important order to execute to-morrow, which must be done. I am heeling and soling Sir Arthur Martin's shooting-boots. Disappoint him, and I lose his servants' custom; lose that, and I lose half my trade. I and my wife must walk home to-night."

"Il ne faut pas," said Mathilde, emphatically. "Trente mille fois, il ne faut pas," and so on to the amount of the half of one of these pages in French, partly to herself and partly to Sir Lionel. Then she got hold of Mrs. Evans and walked on before.

Sir Lionel said, when she had done :

“Mademoiselle D’Isigny says, Evans, that she will not hear for one moment of such an arrangement as yours. She declares that it is perfectly monstrous of you to pull your wife over the Down after dark in such naughty weather, and insists that you and Mrs. Evans shall sup and sleep at Sheepsdén, and be driven over in the morning. Just look at your wife, man, and be reasonable.”

Indeed, she was but a delicate little thing, and there was another life beside hers. Sir Lionel had touched him.

“But it is a Papist house, Sir Lionel; and I am not without my enemies.”

“Do an honest thing like an honest man, and let your enemies be ——” not scattered—something worse. For it was a coarser age than ours; and yet there were gentlemen on the earth in those days, too.

Evans still hesitated.

“See here, then,” said Sir Lionel; “I will sup there myself to countenance you.”

“Your character for Protestantism does not stand very high in the valley just now, Sir

Lionel," said Evans, somewhat slyly. "However, I will come, for the wife's sake. We turn off here."

Mrs. Evans joined him, and Sir Lionel and Mathilde were left standing in the road together.

"You have done a fine thing," he said, "asking a red-hot Primitive Methodist home to Sheepsden! You are a nice young lady to be left in care of your father's house!"

Mathilde began nodding her head rapidly: she nodded it till she was tired, but she never said anything; yet these nods were made by a Frenchwoman, and so were as good as words.

"Your father will be furious."

A nod which somehow—(who is able to analyse French gesticulation?)—expressed, with raised eyebrows, a scared acquiescence.

"Father Martin will be very angry."

Another nod, perhaps with a slight turning of the head on one side, and a trifle of a shrug of the shoulders, as if she would say, "That is no such terrible matter."

"Adèle will laugh at you for ever about it. She has the whip-hand of you now. You, so particu-

lar! You, so religious! You, so Catholically correct!"

A nod, a shrug, a raising of the eyebrows, and, superadded, a slight shaking of the sides, as though of a laughter which never got reflected on the face.

"You have committed a terrible indiscretion. I will tell you what I think will be best. Let me come home with you to Sheepsden, and help you to entertain these people. It will save a great deal of scandal," continued this consummate hypocrite.

"*Allons!*" said Mathilde, taking his arm, and "right-abouting" him up the lane towards Sheepsden. "This is a fine way to save scandal, and you are a fine man to save it. You are in trouble now with the orthodox, on account of us Catholics; now you will be in trouble once more with the orthodox, for receiving Dissenters. It is all trouble together, Lionel, is it not? But let us walk fast, for I will have a good supper for my shoemaker. See here, now! I complain of Adèle for her indiscretions. She is more often indiscreet than I. But when I *am* indiscreet, I show a greater genius for it than she. She never equalled this."

Sir Lionel said, "I believe you are the best little soul in the world," and bent down and kissed her, just as the Rector came swiftly round the corner of the lane, on the way to reading prayers to some old people in an outlying dame's school, in red-hot argument with the radical master-sweep from Stourminster Marshall, on the subject of the last church-rate. These two, being in haste, passed on with only a salutation; and Sir Lionel, reflecting about his public recognition of Evans, the dissenting minister, set down, in the account-book of his mind, 800*l.* extra towards his next election expenses.

When they got comfortably inside the screen at Sheepsden, Mathilde left him for a time with a book, while she assisted, or rather directed, Mrs. Bone to get supper. He had not read long, by M. D'Isigny's lamp, when a very quiet, *good* voice said to him, "I ask your pardon, Sir Lionel; but will you allow me to take off your boots, and give you shoes?"

It was William who spoke. He had a sort of unreasonable dislike of this young man; but he said "Yes," and William knelt down.

When his head was under the lamp, Sir Lionel saw what a really noble head it was. The down-going light from the lamp threw but few shadows on the face, because the face was so strong that in the lower part it caught more light than shade. It was a nice honest face to look at; and Sir Lionel thought, or imagined, that he should like to stand well with every one in this establishment, and so he spoke to this objectionable William.

“You have a good place here?”

“Yes, your honour.”

“You come of a good stock. I hope you will be faithful to Mademoiselle. Here is a guinea for you.”

“I will be faithful to M. D’Isigny and his daughter without a guinea, your honour.”

“Will you not take this one?”

“Thank your honour, no. There was trouble about a guinea before between you and me, and I nearly lost my place through it.”

“Well, but take this one and make friends again.”

There was no resisting this, and William was won. We can say no more about him just now.

We only record the fact, that Sir Lionel could not have bought him for fifty guineas, but won him with one, which he at once expended—buying Mrs. Bone a grey silk gown for fifteen shillings, and his sweetheart, Awdrey, a cotton print for six.

Then Evans came, and they had a pleasant evening, with conversation, noticeable among which was this :

“ I wish I had learnt the French language,” said Evans. “ If I had known what was going to happen, nothing should have prevented me.”

Mathilde, thinking he meant some compliment to her, asked—“ Why ?”

“ Because, my lady, I would have gone as a missionary to France, and have done vast good among the people. Two dozen such as I could have stopped this revolution. Primitive Methodism is the religion of the poor, and they have not got it in France.”

“ Our parish clergy—at least, in my Brittany,” said Mathilde, “ are just as simple, as good, as devoted as yourself, sir. I can pay them no higher compliment, sir. The people in Brittany will follow their priests to the death. You say they

have not got Methodism. That is true; but they have priests who understand every thought and wish of theirs, as well as you do those of your own sect; and, sir, they will die for them."

"I do not doubt it, my lady; you should know. This good Father Martin of whom I have heard is one of them. The Abbé de Firmont, lately at Lulworth, is another."

"Edgeworth is a good fellow," interposed Sir Lionel—"Irish, but good."*

"But is it the same in Paris?" asked Mr. Evans, after the interruption.

* The French call him "de Firmont," the English Abbé Edgeworth. He was the man who was on the scaffold with Louis XVI. I have heard it surmised that he was actually *uncle* to the great Miss Edgeworth, of Edgeworth's-town. But if so, how did he get his territorial title of "De Firmont"? Surely some correspondent of SYLVANUS URBAN can set us right here.—H.K.

This challenge in the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE was answered by a lady well known for her knowledge of French literature, in the following most interesting note:—

"MR. URBAN,—Having observed in your September number, p. 286, that Mr. Henry Kingsley, alluding in the course of his novel, 'Mademoiselle Mathilde,' to the Abbé Edgeworth, makes a foot-note inquiry as to how that ecclesiastic obtained his territorial title, 'De Firmont,' I think it possible that an answer to that question contained in the following brief statement, may not be unwelcome to some of your readers, more especially as it involves one or two other points referred to by Mr. Henry

“Je ne suis pas une Parisienne, frivole, moqueuse, vaine, et inconstante,” said Mathilde, em-

Kingsley with regard to ‘the man who was on the scaffold with Louis XVI.’

“Henry Allen Edgeworth, son of Essex Edgeworth, and said by French biographers to have been *cousin* to ‘the great Miss Edgeworth,’ was born at Edgeworth-town in 1745. His father, a benefited clergyman of the Church of England, having inherited a certain estate in Ireland, was called ‘Edgeworth of Fairy Mount;’ but when Essex Edgeworth became a convert to the Roman Catholic faith, and consequently made his permanent residence at Toulouse, his Irish territorial title lapsed into ‘De Firmont.’ Henry, Essex Edgeworth’s son, was educated in France, first at Toulouse, and afterwards at the Sorbonne. When ordained priest, he entered the fraternity of ‘Les Missions Étrangères’ in Paris, and became Confessor to Madame Elisabeth, who introduced him to her brother Louis XVI. That monarch’s earnest appreciation of this ecclesiastic’s character was best evinced on the scaffold; but after the king’s execution, so imminent was the danger to which the loyal Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont was exposed, that he dwelt in seclusion at Choisy, under the name of ‘Essex,’ until enabled to escape in disguise to England. There, as afterwards at Mittau and elsewhere, the Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont was entitled to all honour; but when the second William Pitt generously desired him to accept a pension, he refused it. By special request of Louis XVIII. at Blankenbourg, he conveyed the order of the ‘Saint Esprit’ to Paul, Emperor of Russia, but although the best friend of the exiled royal family of France, he declined every personal mark of distinction which princes more prosperous at that time than those of France would fain have conferred on him, and devoted himself to the service of the friendless sick and poor. In the summer of 1807, the Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont died of a fever caught in the discharge of his spiritual duties at the Military Hospital of Mittau. Louis XVIII. composed a Latin epitaph in

phatically. "Je suis habitante de l'excellente Bretagne. I ask your pardon for speaking French. Go on, sir."

"I would not speak of religious Brittany," said Evans. "I would not disturb their faith *there*; but I think that my pure Methodism, preached with unction among the priest-ridden population in Paris, would have done great things."

"Protestantism has not flourished in Paris, sir," said Mathilde.

"You dream, you dream, my good Evans. The history of the whole thing is that they want an equalization of property," said Sir Lionel.

"Quite naturally," said Evans. "*We* are Socialist, you know."

"The deuce you are!" said Sir Lionel. "Here

honour of that name, concerning which I have thus presumed to address you.*—I am, &c.,

"A. E. C."

* "Letters of the Abbé Edgeworth, with a sketch of his life prefixed, were printed, one vol., 8vo, in Paris, 1818. The compilation was originally made by the Abbé himself at the urgent request of Louis XVIII. Brief notices of his life are also to be found in the 'Nouvelle Biographie Générale,' and the 'Biographie des Contemporains,' and in other works more inaccessible to the public, but of equal value to French students.—A. E. C."

is pretty company in exchange for my good nature."

"*Theoretically*," replied Evans.

"Not practically, you are quite sure," replied Sir Lionel. "Ashurst is, of course, at your service."

"Theoretically, sir, only," said Evans, "as in the primitive Church. It is only a principle of ours, carried into practice against the law only among a select few of ourselves. We are subservient to all rulers and magistrates. For the time of the prince of the power of the air is not passed, and will not pass, sir, for seventy weeks of years."

"Bedlam! Bedlam! and once more Bedlam! There never was a better fellow than that, and yet, give him his head, he will talk himself into as great a state of nonsense as D'Isigny," said Sir Lionel, as he walked home to Ashurst over the Down. "Everybody is mad, and, upon my honour, I am as mad as ten hatters myself—madder. It would be very nice, but it would be so ridiculous. Nevertheless, she is extremely charming."

Then he walked alone a mile in deep thought,

after which he took up once more the theme that every one was mad, and spoke it out aloud among the dripping junipers,—

“ We are all going mad together. Every man is saying, with an air of calm conviction, the first thing which comes into his head, and quarrelling with every one else who don't agree with him. This, I take it, is the ultimate outcome of Whiggery. I can understand the Tory position, and I can understand the Democratic, but, upon my word and honour, I cannot understand ours. We began removing the landmarks, after all. Nothing it seems is, by our creed, to be ultimately *sacred* except ‘property.’ I'll be hanged if I see why. Why, any brute might get property. It seems to me the first thing to go instead of the last. The advanced people in our party are pitching every formula to the winds except this ‘property.’ The prestige of birth is gone; the religion of the land is going,—both bad things, but not so bad as this last one, which is, after all, the great evil of the land. I am getting somewhat sick of this rosewater Whiggery; D'Isigny has cured me, I suppose. He is a born Whig—a man who will

calmly pull to pieces the old state of things, quietly advance every argument which logically leads to pure democracy, and then expect that everything is to go on exactly as it was before. I'll be hanged if I don't turn Tory—they *do* know what they are about; or Democrat—they also know what they are about. I will wait and think."

The Stour Valley people were right in saying that Sir Lionel had got very unsettled in his opinions since he had been so much at Sheepsden, and that he *néver* would be the man his father was. Both propositions were undeniably true. That he might be a better and nobler man than his father, the old fox-hunting baronet, they never thought. They meant that he was going the wrong way altogether. He had first slid away from the path of righteous Philistines by engaging himself to a French woman. Then he had encouraged Papists, and brought over the abomination of desolation in the shape of Popish vestments in his curricule from Lulworth. Lastly, he had been known, in a public manner, to go to a dissenting place of worship in company with a Popish young lady, to walk home scandalously alone with her, and to assist at the

entertaining at supper of a dangerously democratic nonconformist cobbler. His sins were so great, so innumerable, and withal so complicated, that no one could exactly lay hold of them. All parties, however, agreed that he had broken loose from every tie, and was going to the devil. I am not wise enough to say whether toleration is a good thing or a bad thing. I have only to say that there was none of it in the Stour Valley in 1789.

The Rector, best of men, turned against him. He did not mind Sir Lionel's *faux pas* about the vestments from Lulworth; that was in a way respectable. There were Howards, Talbots, Petres, Welds—people of the most undeniable respectability—who still, unhappily, clung to the more ancient form of faith. This indiscretion of Sir Lionel's was tolerable; the last one was, however, intolerable and *ungentlemanly*, after all the Rector's long-continued efforts to "uproot dissent" in the parish; after he had so frequently undergone the fatigue of preaching for nearly an hour at a time against it (after having previously murdered our noble Liturgy by reading that extraordinary

congeries of prayers, lasting an hour and a half, and which they are pleased to call Morning Service); after all these sacrifices, his beloved Lionel, his Absalom, had taken up, in a scandalously open manner, with a dangerous dissenting cobbler, and had "sat at meat with him," as the Rector put it, who got the more Scriptural as he got the more angry.

"Angry!" I beg pardon—I should have said "hurt." The Rector was friendly with him still, met him as of old, and called him "My dear Lionel;" deferred to him in every way; was more polite than ever; begged him, by note, to undertake once more the responsibility of being his churchwarden for another year; but he declined his invitations to dinner, and, what showed his displeasure more strongly, refused formally, through the gamekeeper, to fish in his water.

As for the squires and baronets in the Valley, they were deeply angry with him. He had allowed his bride to be taken away from him by a Frenchman, and no one had been shot (not that any one of them dared give a Somers the white feather), and "Whig and Tory all agreed" as the song goes,

that he had no principles whatever. He was a hunted man, almost without a backer and without a refuge except his own house.

But not quite. He *had* a backer—a backer that few of them dared face, old and quiet as she was—his own mother, Lady Somers. This strenuous old lady suddenly grew twenty years younger, and offered battle-royal to the combined forces of the Valley. When the Rector committed the overt act of treason, of refusing to fish in Sir Lionel's water, she wrote him a note regretting that she should be unable to receive him in future, and requesting that her prayer-books and hymn-books should be delivered out of the family pew to the bearer. Old Lady Morton, who came cackling over to her with the tale of Sir Lionel's misdoings, she *did* receive. What passed we don't know; but it would almost seem as though gentle Lady Somers had taken a leaf out of the book of her old schoolfellow, Madame D'Isigny of Dinan, for Lady Morton was observed to be in tears when she went away.

What had passed between son and mother? what made her fight his battle so furiously, de-

fyng scandal, the Valley, and the Rector? Who knows?

He had one backer, and he also had one refuge, Sheepsdén; he was always there now. Reader, if you chance to be a man, young, handsome, clever, gentle, and agreeable,—just for mere experiment's sake,—get into the habit of sitting alone, before the fire, with one of the most beautiful, charming, and original women you ever met in your life, keeping your head close to hers, talking in a low voice of all things in heaven and earth; and then see what will happen to you. Much the same, I doubt, as happened to Sir Lionel Somers.

Again, my dear reader, if you happen to be a woman, just let us reverse the former position. Suppose that you are one of the most beautiful, charming, and original women ever met with (as of course you are),—just for mere experiment's sake,—get into the habit of sitting alone, before the fire, with a young, handsome, clever, gentle, and agreeable man, keeping your head close to his, and talking of all things in heaven and earth; and then see what will happen to *you*. Much the same, I doubt, as happened to Mathilde.

And if you are both of you all alone, and have both just been irritated and insulted by a scandalous deception, why then *tant mieux* or *tant pis*, as the matter ultimately turns out.

There was a ghost at Ashurst, which always appeared, said the old women, to the Somers of the time, when loss or misfortune threatened him. The traditions of the ghost were, however, very dim, because, probably, the Somers had been a lucky family ever since they had paid "Non-such James," their thousand pounds for their baronetcy; and so the ghost's services had not been required. Sir Lionel, sitting over the fire late one night this autumn, after returning from Sheepsden, actually thought that he had seen this ghost for a moment; but it was only his grey-headed old mother, in her chamber costume, who came towards him along the dark hall, with the light of her solitary candle flickering on her withered old face, and who said,—

"I believe it is as I wished it to be from the first. What on earth you could ever have seen in that girl Adèle, I am at a loss to conceive."

And Sir Lionel was silent. For Adèle, with all her petulance and frivolity, was a most irresistible little creature ; and the memory of her was strong on him that night.

CHAPTER III.

LA GARAYE.

THE deep green of the bosage of the Brittany woods was deeper in the year 1789 than it is now. In the pre-revolutionary times, before the woods were cut down, the oak and the elm grew and flourished ; now, one sees little except poplar and other quick-growing colourless trees, planted to hide the effect of revolutionary violence. France in the evil old times was green ; now, in the better times, she is grey : like the head of one who has passed through a great affliction.

It was a late and wet season, and the green leaves still hung bravely to the trees. In the old oak and elm time there was the old autumnal silence in the woods ; now, in the popl' age, each tree rustles and whispers suspiciously to every breath of wind. In the old time the thickly-pleached elms and oaks

kept the sound of the coming storm from the shepherd, until the roar and crash came on him together; in the new, the tossing, upturning leaves of the poplars give him better warning. In the old time news travelled slowly; it flies fast enough now.

It was a dripping, dull day in November, when André Desilles turned out of the quiet country road, and entered the long-drawn chestnut avenue which led, and leads still, to La Garaye. Nature was wrapped in steaming, rotting silence; no sound was to be heard beyond the drip of the mist from the trees, the downward fluttering of a leaf, or the rattle of a ripe chestnut, as it fell upon the sodden turf beneath among the rapidly springing autumnal fungi. Hopeless decay was all around him, and one dared not in that year think too much of what spring would bring; and yet there was a look about the whole man which savoured far more of April than of November.

He was dressed carefully and beautifully, as he always was, but now in civilian's clothes, of as perfect cut as those of his friend Louis de Valognes, but rather less dandified. His three-cornered hat, though small and jauntily worn, was untrimmed,

and he wore no powder, his hair being done in a carefully tied club. The cape of his riding-coat added breadth to his otherwise powerful figure, and the whole of that very becoming garment showed off his noble carriage to perfection.

His top-boots were faultless in make, yet thick and strong, and although on foot, he carried the universal riding-whip of those times in his hand. A practised eye could see that he was perfectly dressed, but that he was dressed for travelling. A practised eye might also see that there was expectation, if not hope, in every movement of his carriage.

So he entered the long avenue of La Garaye, the whole vista of which was empty, save that far before him, among the dull autumnal lights and shadows, a priest walked swiftly with fluttering cassock—a hard, black figure among the decaying greens.

“A priest everywhere,” said Desilles, laughing a low and gentle laugh, which might tell a tale to a lover. “Well, I will give you a good start, my worthy father, whoever you are. Priests are not exactly good company just now. They have mainly brought this business about, and now they seem

inclined to drive one mad by jeremiads over their own handy-work."

So he let the priest flutter on round the corner, out of sight, before he quickened his pace. If he had known that it was Father Martin, the man of all others he wished to meet, he would have run after him as hard as he could; but he did not, and so missed the opportunity of getting Father Martin alone. Which was a great pity.

His thoughts, as he walked down the avenue among the dropping chestnuts and the springing fungi? They began here and ended here. "It is impossible that I have miscalculated—it is totally and entirely impossible." The reader will not be puzzled for many minutes.

So he came out into the quaint square flower-garden in front of the Château of La Garaye. It was then, as far as I can make out, from examination of the ruins, a largish mansion house, dating probably from the early part of the 16th century, superadded to some heavy older Norman work. The few windows which remain are what are loosely called "Tudor," but with wonderfully light and thin mullions. What André Desilles saw, as he debouched

among the flower-beds, was a fine enough *façade* of yellowish white stone, not very much unlike a small piece of Bramshill House (if you happen to know it), in point of architecture, but lighter and finer. I turn to Oxford and Cambridge for an illustration, and can find none, either in colour or form. There are pieces at Audley End more like it than anything I have seen.

In the centre of this *façade* was an entrance porch, and in front of it lay a square flower-garden, with turf walks among the beautifully kept flower-beds. In these flower-beds, there grew at that time of the year the old Michaelmas daisy, and a brother flower, the *Aster Novæ Angliæ*; the chrysanthemum also, introduced in 1764 in its earlier and more uncultivated form, was here. It may interest some of my readers to know this; and I think they will not find me wrong.

I calculate on my readers knowing that La Garaye was a great hospital for the imbecile and blind; and, also, that they have read Mrs. Norton's noble poem about it. With all this I have nothing to do; it has been done better by another hand. I have only to do with what André Desilles saw.

The rain poured steadily and heavily down ; so steadily that André himself thought of shelter. He knew perfectly well that this was the monthly *fête*-day at La Garaye, and supposed that they would all be enjoying themselves in-doors. He was right so far. There was not a soul in the garden but three, and they stood there, in front of the porch, without umbrellas.

Louis de Valognes and his bride Adèle, likewise a religious woman of mark in a wimple. Adèle had got in under the cape of her husband's redingote, and was pretty well off considering. Louis had on his very best clothes, but did not look impressive. The rain was weeping off the swan's down in his hat, and making maps on his white buckskin breeches. As for the eminent religious woman, she was in a worse case than either. The rain had taken all the starch out of her wimple, and her wimple had fallen over her nose ; and from the tip of her nose the rain dropped steadily on to the ground. Yet there they stood.

"My dearly beloved souls," said André Desilles, coming up to them. "I thought I should never see you any more."

Louis de Valognes stretched out his hand. Adèle put her lovely little face out from under the cape of her husband's redingote, with her beautiful hair all rumped, tumbled, and wet, and said, "And indeed we thought that we should never see *you* any more; and that you had given up those who love you best in this world." After which she retired under the cape of the redingote again.

"I am so glad to see you," said Louis de Valognes. "You know the Lady Abbess of St. Catherine's." And he bowed towards the religious lady with the rain running off her nose.

"I beg a hundred thousand pardons," said André Desilles; "but to tell you the truth, I did not recognise Madame D'Isigny—I ought to say the Lady Abbess of St. Catherine's. My dear madame—I mean, my Lady Mother—are you not very wet? Let us go in-doors."

"Tell him," said the Lady Abbess, solemnly.

"The fact is, my dear André," said Louis de Valognes, "that Father Martin is in-doors, giving the galette and cider to the patients."

"Father Martin!" said Desilles,— "the very man I want to see."

"Yes ; but he is being assisted by Madame D'Isigny of Dinan, which accounts for our standing out in the rain."

"The devil !" said André Desilles. "But look here ! Madame of St. Catherine's must not be kept out here in the wet. You are without resource, you. Go into the *conciergerie* there, and dry the wimple of Madame. You are without resource."

"She will come there," said the Lady Abbess, extending her arms before her with her fingers stretched out. "She will come there. And what matters a little more or less rheumatism to a poor old woman who has given her life to religion ? Let us stay in the rain. She will not find me here."

However, André's suggestion of taking the Lady Abbess to the *conciergerie* was acted on, and André Desilles went into the refectory and confronted Madame of Dinan.

What passed is not on record. André came to them in the *conciergerie* after a time, looking old and thoughtful. "I don't think she will come here," he said. "She *may*, but I don't think she

will. If she does, we can get out by that door into the corridor, and lock it after us."

Louis and Adèle had got off the Lady Abbess' wimple, and were drying it: she sat before the fire, drying her bald scanty old hair. Louis said, "Have you had a quarrel?" and André said, "It takes two people to make a quarrel; and I, for my part, said nothing. I know more about the faults of my character than I did a quarter of an hour ago. That is all. Consider that a frank friend is a great possession."

"Lock the door!" cried out Madame the Abbess, starting up in extreme perturbation, with the steam coming from her grey old hair. "Lock the door, and put something against it. I hear her voice. She is coming here. Stand between me and her, and I will give you each a *novena*. Think of that, dear young friends. *Apage, Satanas!* where is my rosemary—I mean rosary?* Plenary indulgence, three *novenas*, and in case of death, masses. Think of it, and lock the door!"

They were indeed scarcely less alarmed than the

* Romorin : Rosaire. The slip of the tongue is more absurd in English than in French.

poor old Abbess. The dextrous André Desilles just had time to lock the door before it was beaten violently on the outside, and a terrible hoarse voice said :—

“Come out, you half-hearted revolutionist, and face an Englishwoman! Come out, you poor miserable drenched old Abbess, and let me scold you! Come out, you Americanized Lafayettist, André Desilles, and hear your doom from a witch! Come out, thou wretched dandy-bridegroom, De Valognes, and bring thy silly bride, married on the vigil of the destruction of Sodom! Hah! you sit cowering there silent, and dare not face Old Cassandra. Help me to beat this door down, Father Martin. You inside there! What have you done with Mathilde?” (here she beat at the door again). “What have you done with the only individual of the family worthy of more than the name of animal. Let us beat the door down, father.”

The sharp, clear, decisive voice of Father Martin was heard next.

“Madame will gain little by that. The instincts of Madame are, in the main, right. I on the whole agree with Madame; yet it would be better for the

Church and for the Throne, if Madame were dead. Madame's fury alienates all the honest souls who are wavering."

"My fury!" said the terrible hoarse voice again. "I tell you, Martin, that the Revolution *is* fury. The Revolution lies in Marat's hands and in mine. I can match his fury; but he is backed, and I am not. Well, I will leave these few frightened sheep, if you desire it."

The few frightened sheep looked out of window, and saw the awful Madame D'Isigny of Dinan get into her carriage.

She turned towards their window once or twice before she went, and they saw her clearly. Desilles had not seen her lately until just now, and confessed his astonishment to the others. The voice which he had heard outside the door, was like a voice from a mad-house. The lady he saw getting into her carriage, was a well-dressed and noble-looking woman of singular beauty. She scowled, and held her arms tightly folded across her breast, but she was to all appearance a perfect lady. He was utterly unable to connect the hoarse, rude, terrible voice and words,

with the elegant lady who stepped into her carriage, and with a smile made room for Father Martin beside her.

You will have to remember more than once, if you read this tale, that we are speaking of 1789, when people were wilder, fiercer, and more exasperated than now.

Let us return to our half-hearted sheep locked into the *conciergerie*. André Desilles was the first to speak, and he said, "Well, she is gone ; and, what is more unlucky, has taken Father Martin with her. I wished very much to speak to him. I wanted to ask him about Mathilde."

"Well," said Adèle, somewhat pertly, "we can tell you as much about her as he can."

Indeed, Adèle, you could not. She never made a confidant of *you*.

"Is she all alone at Sheepsden?" asked André Desilles.

"All alone," they answered. Father Martin could have answered differently, but they only spoke as they knew.

"Then look here, dear people, and Madame the Lady Abbess, also. I wish by-gones to be by-gones

entirely. I do not wish to bring the past into the present. In fact, I refuse to do so. Dear Louis, you, now so happily married to a wife in every way worthy of you, will confess that there was at one time a little confusion."

"Louis is not to be called to account for poor dear Mathilde's vanity," said Adèle, promptly and pertly.

"By no means," said André Desilles, bowing to Adèle, and thinking her on the whole the most contemptible little person he had ever seen. "But all I wish to learn is this. Is it an actual fact that Mathilde is in perfect solitude, without one single friend?"

"Such is undoubtedly the case," replied Adèle. "Louis, my dear, poke my aunt with your cane, for she is nodding off, and will have her head in the fire directly. Mathilde is, undoubtedly, all alone. She made her bed, and is lying on it."

"Adèle, be quiet," said Louis de Valognes.

"I beg your pardon, Louis," said Adèle. "I did not catch what you said."

"I said *be quiet!*" said Louis, with great emphasis.

M'

"Certainly," said Adèle, "I will be perfectly quiet."

Louis was so very decisive in the way he said "be quiet," that she, like a thorough little coward as she was, never fought him again. However, André Desilles was not her husband, and so she revenged herself on him. If she had only had the weapons—if she had only known about Sir Lionel Somers, as Father Martin did, she might have made herself exasperatingly disagreeable to André Desilles, and moreover have saved a deal of useless trouble.

"Yes," she said, "Mathilde is absolutely alone at Sheepsden,—alone, I mean, with the groom and the housekeeper. Unless, indeed, my father has gone back there."

"You know that he has not, Adèle," said Louis de Valognes, somewhat sternly.

"He had not a week ago," replied Adèle; "but he might be there by now, nevertheless."

"You have heard from M. D'Isigny, then?" said André Desilles.

"Yes, we heard yesterday," replied Adèle. "I would show you his letter; but there are allusions

to you in it, and truth, for truth is in me a perfect fault, compels me to say that they were by no means complimentary."

"I am aware of M. D'Isigny's objections to me; I know them to be trivial, and I know that they might be removed by ten minutes' explanation. I do not doubt, knowing and respecting your father as I do, that they are strongly expressed. I know also, Adèle, that your father would face Satan and his companion angels single handed; but if he was driven to call for assistance, he would call on André Desilles."

"This is strange talk; you *ennuyez* me with your fallen angels!" said Adèle.

"You cannot understand it, my pretty bride. Let it go. Can I do anything for you at Sheepsdén?"

"Why!" cried Adèle, laughing a shallow little laugh. "You are never going *there*?"

"Adèle, be silent," said Louis de Valognes, more emphatically than ever. "I say, be silent. André, may God go with you! You may do one thing at Sheepsdén: take this kiss to Mathilde. Now let us have cheerful badinage. How about thy regiment,

thou turncoat? Did you not lecture me once for going to England and leaving my regiment? Now, faithless and false, thou goest thyself."

"With regard to the Regiment du Roi," said André Desilles, with a calm, humorous smile, "it could not be much worse, and might be somewhat better. My presence has done but little—my absence may induce regret; and regret, penitence. It is at least worth a trial."

"And a journey to Sheepsden?" said Adèle, demurely.

"Precisely," said André Desilles, laughing. "Well, the Athenians regretted their Aristides. Let us hope, and laugh a little before the night comes. What a strong smell of burning! Thousand thunders! the old woman is on fire!"

In fact, the Lady Abbess had done more than dry herself, and fall asleep during the process. She had put her undergarment so near the fire that it had caught and was smouldering, sending up a handsome and hopeful little column of smoke. André and Louis had hold of her directly, and put it out. The old lady woke up, thanked them, lamented about her petticoat to them, told them what

it cost, and fell to telling her beads; but Adèle, meanwhile, had started up and darted along the corridor, crying *Au feu! au feu!* until she had fallen almost fainting into the arms of a vigorous old *Sœur de Charité*. The alarm spread. The idiots began to screech and giggle; and the blind began praying, and feeling about for an exit to what had long been their home, but what they now began to believe was to be their grave.

Everything was in confusion in one moment, as would of course be the case in an establishment composed of the blind and the idiotic. I said everything—not quite everything; for there were seven well-trained Sisters of Charity, oldish women, tried for nerve and for gentleness, trained scientifically under the best doctors: religiously, with such light as they had. There were seven of these; and the Lady Superior, clearest headed of them all, glided—a tall, dark figure—out of her room, and made order out of disorder in one instant.

“Sister Margaret and Sister Lucy, you will go to the source of the alarm, and immediately report to me. There are gentlemen in the house who will assist you. Sisters Cecilia and Anna, you will go

to the blind, and keep them quiet. Sisters Veronica and Martha, you will amuse the imbeciles. Sister Elizabeth"—to the sister who was assisting Adèle—"you will continue your present avocation, and try to calm the excessive terrors of Madame de Valognes. I will go and rouse the men."

Everything was in order in five minutes. By the time that the Lady Superior had roused the hinds outside, and had followed the alarm of fire into the *conciergerie*, Madame of St. Catherine's had ceased to lament the damage to her petticoat, and was going on with her prayers. The Lady Superior pointed out respectfully to the Lady Visitor, the Abbess D'Isigny, that Madame de Valognes had raised an alarm of fire, and the Lady Abbess had piteously pulled up her serge dress, and pointed out her burnt petticoat beneath it. Meanwhile, Desilles was saying to De Valognes,—

"I don't think much of your wife's nerves, Louis. My cousin is everything to be desired; but I don't think much of her nervous system."

"She *is* nervous," said Louis.

"Most confoundedly so," said Desilles. "She will get some of us into trouble with her nerves."

She would be much better in England. Nerves won't do in France just now. Tell me, what is D'Isigny doing?"

"He is hard at work at politics. You know, of course, that he is elected for States-General?"

"No. How?"

"Sieur Gaspard, of Avranches, getting sick of things generally, has been so wise as to commit suicide. D'Isigny came down at once, and—as the English say—'stood' for the place, and the baillage has elected him. He has pledged himself not to commit suicide, but what other pledges he has given I cannot say."

"Did he come here and see you, while he was so near?"

"Not he," said Louis de Valognes. "We wrote to him to ask his consent to our union, and he replied that he was not going to interfere with any arrangements we might have made for going to the devil together. That was all we could possibly have wished, you know."

"Exactly," said André Desilles. "Marries his daughter to a Marquisate and a great property, and gets the credit of having submitted to the affair

unwillingly. You get, however, the Dorsetshire estates with her?"

"Yes; and you the Brittany."

"I have got neither wife nor estate yet," said André. "Tell me, then, what line of politics is D'Isigny taking? To what party does he belong?"

"To the party D'Isigny," said Louis, laughing. "He belongs to the club of the Feuillants, and they listen to him when he is not in a state of distraction, which is seldom. He has quarrelled with everyone except Mirabeau, the man he vowed to insult. They, somehow or another, have come together; but this has led to worse things."

"How, then?" asked André Desilles.

"Well, thus. Mirabeau, the younger, has an itching palm—loves money. Now, her Majesty, seeing D'Isigny and Mirabeau often together, made the mistake of offering him money. Not only made this mistake, but sent, as her ambassador, Cardinal Leroy to offer it to him."

"The devil!" said André Desilles, for the second time that day.

"I quite agree with you," said Louis de Valognes. "If genius combined with indiscretion could ruin

any one, they will ruin her Majesty. The effects of this negotiation I leave to your imagination."

"You do wisely. It is inconceivable. The Queen is so clever and so politic."

"This is not a time for clever people," said Louis. "Some of the clever people will find their heads off their shoulders before long."

"I am sorry that D'Isigny is so quarrelsome. He is honest."

"It is not a time for honest people either," said Louis. "So look to *your* head."

"He is wise also," said André Desilles.

"It is scarcely a time for wise people either," said De Valognes. "I am smaller and cleverer than thou. I can see things which thou canst not. I am nearer to the earth than thou, and can see the things on the earth better. Trees like thyself will be cut down, and shrubs like me will remain and grow in a regenerated France. We will talk of other matters. Are you justified in leaving Sergeant Barbot to corrupt your regiment in your absence?"

"Barbot goes with me as my servant," said André Desilles.

“That is wise,” said Louis. “I hope that he does not murder you. By the way, that William, D’Isigny’s servant—who seems from Adèle’s account to be another person of the same stamp—may fall out with him and box him to death.”

“It is possible,” said André. And he departed for Sheepsdén.

CHAPTER IV.

A GROUP OF OUR GRANDFATHERS.

IN those days, there used to be held at Stourminster Osborne a foolish old fair ; nay, such is the persistency of human folly, that it is held there still. It was not a cattle fair, because Welsh, Hereford, and Devonshire beasts were by this time half fat on the latter math ; it was not a hiring fair, for old quarter-day had passed and gone this two months. If you asked for the reason of this foolish fair, the only answer you were likely to get, was—“that it was a pleasure fair.” And then, looking from the sloppy mud below to the leafless trees above, you begun to wonder.

It was held on the 4th of December, and was utterly and entirely aimless, causeless, and purposeless. In one of the most purely witty books which has been written lately—“Alice’s Adventures

in Wonderland"—Alice asks why they only drew things which begun with an M. The March hare puzzles her by asking, "Why not?" So I suppose that the only reason why this Stourminster Osborne fair was held, was that there was no overwhelming reason for its suppression.

There were booths in the main street, where they sold gingerbread toys and twopenny articles of jewelry. There were a few poor shows, a fat woman, a lean boy, a tall young man, and something in spirits too horrible for description; the *dramatis personæ* of Mrs. Gamp in one of her most celebrated passages.

It was enough to attract a crowd. The agricultural labourer of those times could take a holiday. He was not the over-worked slave that he is now, any more than he was the long-suffering, overburdened man, who remains gentle, quiet, honest, and obedient, under his almost unbearable wrongs. In those days they would not have dared to do what they habitually do to my neighbours and friends now. The times were hotter. Let this question pass—for a time.

There was a great crowd, however,—a foolish,

wondering crowd; the young men with ribands in their hats, staring and gaping almost idiotically, while their brother agriculturists in Dauphiny, more especially, were combining. These young men were the brothers of the men of Aboukir and Trafalgar; nay, there were some of the Aboukir and Trafalgar men actually present. Grand-looking boys of about eighteen, with bold, keen, dangerous-looking eyes, who swaggered about, on leave from Portsmouth, clothed only in their blue shirt and trousers, with their white chests bare in spite of the cold; boys who developed a somewhat remarkable creed, perhaps one of the lowest, perhaps one of the highest ever developed—that of keeping on firing their guns rapidly, and with perfect precision, until the French had stopped.

At this silly twopenny fair, there were also the men of Albuera, Vimieira, nay, even of Waterloo. The Waterloo man was represented by a little child of three; a Martin of course, who laid in the gutter in a passion, scandalously exposing himself, and kicking at his mother. He was ready for the French twenty-five years afterwards in the heights of Mont S. Jean,—nay, he is there still.

One would have liked to see this crowd, for it was one of the last groups of an older form of English life which was passing away, we hope and believe ultimately for the better; though these hinds were undoubtedly better off than are their grandsons. The position of every class in the community has improved since then, with the solitary exception of the agricultural labourer. He was a serf then, and remains a serf now; but he was better treated in the last old days of a dying feudalism, than he is now under the new laws of supply and demand. Never mind, he will be better off than ever soon. I wish to draw no moral, only I confess that I should have liked, from mere honest curiosity, to see the brothers of the men of the Nile and Trafalgar amusing themselves.

Their amusements, I should think, were coarse and rude, including a great deal of horse-play. Marryat and Michael Scott describe them for us, after they had grown refined and ennobled with much fighting, and say a trifle or so of beating; and have shown us their violence and their tenderness; their strength and their weakness; their

babyish superstitions, which were inconceivably great; and their practical wisdom, dexterity, and shiftiness, which were inconceivably greater. The breed is not extinct, though in the extreme south somewhat debauched by good living. Among the northern collieries the breed seem to flourish, and their natural leaders seem to be alive also; for instance, Mr. Mammatt. Who was Mr. Mammatt? I can find no deed of valour like his.

There were two figures among the crowd which were made way for, and looked up to with universal respect; those of Sir Lionel Somers, and the Rector. They were both dearly beloved by the common people, who had been given to understand that they had quarrelled: they were pleased to see them reconciled; and could none of them avoid remarking that they looked a pair of gentlemen, every inch of them. The old *women* said that they were the best grown couple for miles, and were not far wrong.

The head and leader of the Martin family might well compare with either of them, however. A man of a very high-bred family (there is very good breeding, and there are some very good names

among the agricultural labourers). He came of a somewhat ne'er-do-well, but restless and high-spirited family; the principal *specialités* of which were, that the men were fond of fighting and poaching, and the women, though all beautiful, never had a taint upon their names. This Martin, the representative of the family, was now sixty-five, a magnificent old man, over six feet high, who might have been in a farm if he had not been a poacher; but was only a labouring hind after all, and who, even above the rest of his family, was known for a kind of reckless impudent humour, not quite unrepresented in the present day among the same class. This man walked straight up to Sir Lionel and the Rector, and confronted them. And the crowd, knowing all the circumstances, gathered round, seeing that there would be fun, and grinning in ready anticipation.

"Martin," said Sir Lionel, "I wonder you can look me in the face."

Martin immediately put on a look of foolish wonder, and scratched his head, which brought down the laughter of the crowd at once; but he said nothing.

"Where did you get those trout, sir, which you sold at the 'Leeds Arms' on Tuesday?" asked Sir Lionel. And the Rector echoed, "Aye, come now. Let us hear something of *that*."

The crowd listened with their laugh ready. "I won't deny, Sir Lionel, that I am a short-tempered man."

"The trout, sir?" said Sir Lionel.

"I'm a coming to 'em," said Martin, solemnly. "I've as fine a plant of cabbages, Sir Lionel, in my little garden as goes down to the water, as ever you see. And they went, and they went. One time I thought it was the papists, another time I thought it was the gipsies, another time I thought it was the excisemen. But last Saturday midnight, I ran out on a sudden, and I'm blessed if I didn't catch five brace and a half of your trout, hard at work in among my cabbages, like rabbits. I won't deny that I lost my temper, and knocked about a couple of brace of them about the head, so hard that they couldn't get back to the river. If you don't keep they trout of yours out of poor men's gardens, I'll summons you."

This suited the crowd very well, but they did not

laugh very much ; they were many of them looking the other way.

“ This is sheer folly, sir,” said Sir Lionel.

“ Others may be foolish too,” said Martin. “ Do you mind, Sir Lionel, the time I was teaching you to swim in the mill-head, and you on a sudden, half-wiped and naked, caught hold of the rod, hooks a three-pound trout, and cuts away after him, just as you was, through the miller’s bees, oversetting six skeps.* You bears the marks yet, no doubt.”

This would certainly have turned the tables against Sir Lionel, but there was a dead silence. Martin, finding his wit falling dead, turned to see the cause, and Sir Lionel Somers and the Rector looked up also.

The crowd had parted, and had made a circle elsewhere, and in the centre of it stood a man quite

* “ Hives.” This is no great specimen of a style of “ chaff ” of which you may yet hear a great deal among the older agricultural hinds in a few parts. The best forms of it are always too coarse for this age. It generally depends for its point on subjects which have been more than sufficiently handled by Smollett. It may be urged that this example is silly, but it is authentic and characteristic, and so not utterly worthless.

as noble, and more remarkable than either Sir Lionel, the Rector, or Martin.

André Desilles, dressed in a long grey redingote, top boots, and a three-cornered hat; a man with a name for all time; tall, calm, majestic, gentle; looking patiently over the heads of the hinds who surrounded him, until he should catch the eye of the two gentlemen he saw beyond.

Martin with his nonsense made way at once, and the crowd divided, while Sir Lionel and the Rector advanced towards the stranger. Three hats were lifted, and three bows were made, while the rustics looked on, admiring the manners of the gentry.

There was no doubt about his nation. The perfect elegance of the whole man, though not so much ornamented as that of Louis de Valognes, bespoke the Frenchman. Sir Lionel Somers, whose colloquial French had lately been improved in a way which André Desilles would have little liked had he known all, anticipated the Rector and spoke in French, with such an imitation of the *haute noblesse* as he had learned at Lulworth.

“I wait to receive the commands of monsieur,

and I hope that monsieur will conceive himself welcome to our rude little English village."

Monsieur considered himself welcome, with a smile, which might be more natural by means of his welcomer's pedantic French. He felt, he could not say why, accurate certainty that his welcomer was Sir Lionel Somers. "Nature," he said, "seldom or never produced repetitions of her highest and noblest models in a limited area. He was in the domain of Sir Lionel Somers, and nothing except the given word of Sir Lionel, should ever persuade him that he did not, at that moment, stand face to face with Sir Lionel himself."

Sir Lionel was forced to admit his identity after this wonderful piece of Frenchism. As for the Rector, he opened his mouth, and never shut it again until the interview was over; after which he said, "What a fool he was to take that line with a Frenchman. Why didn't he leave him to *me*."

But André Desilles had taken the wind out of their sails in the complimentary line, and left them staring. So he was forced to speak again.

"I scarcely come into this valley as a stranger," he said. "My name is André Desilles, and I come

to visit my cousin, Mademoiselle Mathilde D'Isigny, at Sheepsden. I only am beginning the route to that place; and behold! I meet two very old friends by report. Sir Lionel, and surely the Rector."

The Rector now, in his turn, had to reply to the politeness of this splendid Frenchman. His attitudes were, comparatively speaking, those of a bear which has danced too often on the same day. I resist a dangerous temptation when I refuse to reproduce his colloquial French. They gave him the route across the fields, and saw him go. Then Sir Lionel said,—“That is *her* cousin, you know.”

“So I understood,” said the Rector.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOOLISH REASONS FOR MATHILDE AND SIR LIONEL GETTING IN LOVE.

MATHILDE was a woman with a very hungry heart. Yet, like many hungry-hearted women, she was easily satisfied. She wanted so very little love to satisfy her, but she had never had even that little.

Out of the abundance of her own great heart, she could love. God only, who made that great heart, can say how much. Could love, I say,—*did* love! Every thing she met she took to her great capacious bosom and loved them. High and low, rich and poor, dogs, cats, and dormice. There was an enormous capacity of loving in her which expressed itself in her face. It was this which made Sir Joshua Reynolds pause opposite her; but he passed on, and left the riddle unread. And again, she

loved Marat, because Marat loved the poor. Aye, and Marat loved her too, for Marat could love; though he was a better hand at hating than loving.

Mathilde had never been loved but by one man, André Desilles, and he had never told her of it. Desilles, unless I am mistaken, was a man of the Havelock-Willoughby type; the sort of man whom we only develope in the solitudes of India. This man had always loved her. But with his purist reticence he had never told her of his love; nay, he had done worse than this: by a clumsy remark, clumsily and falsely reported, he had insulted her in regard to her physical gait and appearance. No one takes more to heart a fancied insult of this kind, than a very sensitive woman, who has her heart bare and open before the world. And then, once more, Mathilde had been told as a child that she was beautiful; and the first person who had ever dared, as she thought, to say that she was unbeautiful and clumsy was the ill-reported André Desilles—the man who loved her best in all the world.

Louis de Valognes had deceived her, and insulted her; yet she loved him whilst she forgave him.

Why? How well I know why. The reason should be told by a lighter hand than mine, yet I think that even I can make you understand that reason.

Adèle. Their house had been what the Scotch call a "dour" house. All rules and regulations: a weary house, a dull house. The only bright beam of sunshine in the house, the only radical thing which had rebelled against dull formulas, had been Adèle; and her naughtiness and rebellion had been infinitely loveable.

Mathilde, again, had only one person to love, and that person was Adèle. I fancy, although I do not know, that Mathilde was a woman who ought to have had children to take care of, for she loved those best who teased her most. This is the reason why she loved Adèle so dearly. To her Adèle, the plague, aye, and more than the plague of her life, she gave up Louis de Valognes with scarcely a murmur.

She was left alone, as you have seen. Sir Lionel Somers was also left alone. And these two people, meeting at the dissenting chapel, at which they had no business to be, to the unutterable confusion of all counsel, fell in love with one another. You

urge that they could not help it, and I quite agree with you. But they did.

She was a woman with a great longing heart, which had never been satisfied. She had asked so little, but now she had got so much. She got the heart of Sir Lionel Somers, which was worth having. She had also got the heart of André Desilles, which was worth more : the heart of a man who will fold his arms, and stand calmly before a cannon, face to face with levelled muskets, handled by infuriated hands, is worth something, young ladies, if you will only believe me. Mathilde had such a heart at her feet always, but she never cared for it. She wished for a demonstrative man, and men of the type of André Desilles, calm, thoughtful, religious men—men who carefully calculate the time when their morality will allow them to commit suicide for their country—these men are not demonstrative towards those they love : even Sir Lionel Somers was more so.

How many times did he meet her alone before he laid his life at her feet? Three times : the old number. Once at the door of the Methodist chapel ; once at the bedside of one of his gamekeepers—a delicate young man, who, like most other beautiful

young men, died of consumption; and yet once again.

It was in the crystal October morning. He was out shooting, with a brace of spaniels and a foolish old flint-locked gun. Pointers were hardly known then, and "shooting flying" was in its infancy. The system of walking to your birds, which has done so much for the richer classes, by teaching them to use their legs, was only beginning. Sir Lionel Somers was one of the first men who took up with it. And on this particular October morning, with the autumnal scents floating round him, making him somehow think of death, of peace, and of quiet churchyards, his spaniels, or his legs, or his inclinations, carried him to Sheepsdon.

D'Isigny had given him right of shooting there. He was not unwilling to exercise it. Before he got there he banged off his gun at birds which were clearly not in shot; so often, that his attendant keeper (a Martin, of course) went about with him on the subject. Sir Lionel told him to "go about for a fool." When they got close to Sheepsdon the man "went about for a fool," and held his tongue, which is more than servants will do now-a-days.

For from under the golden-boughed elms came Mathilde herself, with the light of the morning sun blazing on her face.

The Martins represent the genius of that Stour valley. When the Martin who was attending Sir Lionel saw Mathilde approaching, his genius was so good to him as to advise him to retire. I should fancy that when the lion and lioness walk side by side, the leopard retires. Martin had the sense to retire, while Mathilde, coming from under the golden elms, with the morning sun strong on her quaintly beautiful face, approached Sir Lionel.

Martin the hind, the gamekeeper, knew that the business was all over, done, and finished from that moment. *He* went home with the birds, leaving Mathilde and Sir Lionel together.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE OF THE SADDEST CHAPTERS IN THE WHOLE STORY.

POOR Mathilde's life at Sheepsdon was, after all, very sad and miserable.

She loved Mrs. Bone and the silent William ; she talked to them both habitually. But then they knew no French, and she had to talk to them in English. The effort of forming her ideas into English was quite enough to counterbalance the pleasure she felt in talking to them. After all, while speaking to them she was practically alone.

She got a lover, Sir Lionel Somers. But then, again, her English was better than his French ; so she never had a chance of speaking her great thoughts to him. Moreover, did she ever love Sir Lionel Somers as a man wishes to be loved ? I cannot say ; she fell in love with him as he did with

her. But did she *love* him? This part of the story should be written by a woman.

Her position offered to her father remarkable opportunities of disciplining her, which he was not the man to neglect. His letters to her were extremely short and formal; he gave her no information either about politics or about himself. When he alluded to any personal matters at all, it was only to point out to her the inestimable advantages she was enjoying at Sheepsden, and what a splendid opportunity it was for her, in her contemplative seclusion, to think over and correct the numerous faults which he had, with the deepest regret, noticed in her character. *His* letters were always folded and put by as soon as read, with a sigh.

She had letters from Adèle, which she loved better, though not well. Adèle was, under some influence or another, developing the habit of smartness and sharpness in speaking of other people, which is so very charming in her *Mémoires*, but which people of larger natures, like Mathilde, think silly and ill-conditioned. Every new person whom Adèle met was sent over to Mathilde, dressed with

This habit of mind was so utterly unakin to that of Mathilde, that it distressed her. She was utterly unable to sneer at people. Adèle never did anything else now.

Mathilde had, moreover, letters from Father Martin, which she loved. They were more like the letters of a kindly man of the world than of a priest. They were not intended to instruct her; they were intended to interest and amuse her. She saw the intention, and was grateful.

News she had. The handsome and intelligent young Mr. Jenkinson, who lived to be the gentle and well-beloved Lord Liverpool—a man who got men to work together by the personal respect which they all bore to his mild wishes, who could never have been got to pull together by intrigue; this gentle Mr. Jenkinson sent his old friend and school-fellow, Sir Lionel Somers, plenty of news, and, of course, Sir Lionel brought it to her. Things in her beloved France were getting darker, wilder, and fiercer as month after month went on. The châteaux were catching fire now. Sir Lionel read out to her the account of these burnings, and worse, from the letters of Mr. Jenkinson in English, and

from the *Moniteur* in his French.* The people which Mathilde loved so dearly and so well were getting maddened under these wrongs. And everywhere, appearing, disappearing, and re-appearing, was her maniac old friend, Marat, whom she had liked because he cared for the people: the man who licked his dry lips when he spoke: the man who looked steadily, though fiercely, at you from under his lowered eyebrows; the man who, when he had spoken, held his wild, curly, hideous, head on one side, waiting for your answer,—an answer which in those times you could not give.

Everywhere, in the dim dribble of news which came to her, this man's name turned up: more and more frequently as time went on. Dog, scoundrel, maniac, swindler, were the sort of names which were given to him. She had liked this man; and she was not the only person, by a few millions, who liked him. She had a happy or unhappy trick of believing everything which was told her. She grew puzzled about her old friend; and she had no one

* If this is a blunder, it is a very slight one. I do not know the date of the first appearance of the *Moniteur*. In the next year we have plenty of it.

to consult except Sir Lionel Somers, and so she consulted him.

A hopeless, barren business. Conceive a sentimental woman consulting a well-formed and decorous Whig on the subject of Marat. The most frantic Tory would have understood him better, and would have hung him up on a forty-foot gallows. Sir Lionel's Whiggery became volcanic on the subject of Marat. Any one of his Tory neighbours would quietly have put Marat out of the way, as one would shoot a mad dog, or kill a savage horse. Sir Lionel, with his Whiggism, would have had him die a thousand deaths first. He had betrayed the cause of orderly freedom; he had utilised the Whig or Gironde formulas too logically; and so Satan was a gentleman to him.

Mathilde got no comfort from her English lover. Her heart hungered to talk to an intelligent Frenchman, in his own language, on the wild whirling storm which was beginning in France. She had that queer love for the poor—that queer, overwhelming desire to assist them at all hazards, which a great many people retain to the present day. Marat was with her in this, as was also Father

artin. But the decorous Whiggery of Sir Lionel mers would fit in nowhere.

At last she got a talk with a Frenchman in her n beloved language. One afternoon Sir Lionel mers—after having pointed out to her that a two-nnyworth of democracy, mixed with ten-penny-orth of Whiggery, would exactly make a shilling; d that no other current coin could be accepted—parted to the fair to meet the Rector, Mathilde ing about her domestic duties.

Adèle, in her *Mémoires*, sometimes hints that athilde, who suffered so much for her, was little tter than a very dear fool. It is possible that dèle is right; but on this particular afternoon she rldly behaved well. It was her cousin, doubtless -that is an excuse. It was a man whom she had ten declared had insulted her: that goes against r. On the whole, she behaved with the grossest discretion. But she was all alone; and the sound 'her native tongue was dear to her.

This afternoon of the fair she was inside the old reen, bustling about with her pots and pans, em-oying herself with that domestic economy in hich very high-class women take an interest, which

is puzzling to me : when, turning round, she saw her cousin, André Desilles, in his manly beauty, standing and looking at her. And then, like Genevieve in Coleridge's almost unequalled ballad,

"Fled to him, and wept."

She put her noble head on her cousin's bosom, and looked up into his quiet face. "André! André!" she said; "you have come after me, you well-beloved! André, dear, they have all gone away from me, and left me all alone among these English."

He thought that it was love; it was only sisterly affection. It was a time of mistakes; she wanted a Frenchman to talk to, and he was the first who came to hand. Although she had disliked André Desilles and his precisionism all her life, she loved him for the moment because he was a Frenchman. She did not suffer for deceiving him; she purged her fault on other grounds. As for him, *Nanci!*

CHAPTER VII.

ANDRÉ, LIONEL, AND MATHILDE.

ENGLAND was quiet that autumn. Here and there were a few wild democrats casting about what seemed to be wild whirling words—words which sounded strange enough then, though now grown familiar; nay, even—let us hope for good—reduced to practice. In the autumn of 1789, the words of those few early democrats sounded in the ears of the people like idle tales. They were like the scattered patches of nimbus, which the sailors call “prophet-clouds,” which come sweeping up from the south-west, and herald the storm which follows. Landsmen, when they see these prophet-clouds sweeping swiftly and steadily across the western sky at evening, say, “They are clouds, and we shall have rain.” Sailors, more experienced, say, “We shall have wind with it, and wild wind, too;” and

send down the top-gallant masts, and bend the best hemp cable on to the best bower anchor.

But this autumn the landsmen who said only cloud, and the real sailors who said wind, storm, ruin, and destruction, were agreed on one point. They both said "wait." "Let us see," said both parties, "if this frightful thunder rattle, to the south there in France, is coming our way." In the next year the French Revolution stood before the eyes of men as almost the greatest fact of all time; and Englishmen, in a somewhat puzzled way, began to range themselves on different sides. But in the autumn and winter of 1789 the attitude of the English people was that of wonder and expectation. Both the inexperienced landsmen and the experienced sailors agreed that it would be better to wait, and see how the thing would go.

Sir Lionel Somers, André Desilles, and the Rector talked one day,—a strange trio,—much as men were talking in those days, I think. André Desilles said, "The seeds of democracy are very easily sown, and they grow also very easily, for they fall in fruitful soil. Democracy promises so much, and with such good hope of a harvest. I can

forgive a man for being a thorough-going democrat, so long as he is honest.

“If one might speak and live, one could ask,” said Sir Lionel, “Where is there such thorough-going radicalism as real Christianity? But as one cannot speak and live in these days, I do not ask that question, but put it aside, and decline to ask it.”

“Martin and D’Isigny, however,” said André Desilles, calmly, “refused to put this question by. They both—the one violently and furiously, the other mildly and with tact—declare that Christianity and democracy are one and the same thing. Here one gets into a perfect maze of differences, which the most patient listener could scarcely take the trouble to puzzle out. Martin declared himself a Christian and a democrat, on the ground that democracy meant Christianity and nothing else, and *vice versa*.”

“D’Isigny,” said Sir Lionel, “took other grounds. He was elaborate in his arguments. You will spare me the pain of going into the lamentably illogical arguments of our friend. They amount to this: Christianity could be proved to be

untrue; but it was the best system of morality which had been ever seen, and was necessary for the government of the masses. Now, who are the fanatics? I should say D'Isigny. They, too, are toiling and labouring in their various ways," continued Sir Lionel. "I, as a headlong Protestant, love and admire Father Martin, the Papist, beyond most men. It is impossible to avoid loving men who give up their whole lives to doing good. Helping to burn down his chapel is one thing; loving and respecting him is quite another."

The above-mentioned opinions are not, as will be seen, my own. They are merely the fag ends of many discussions held between the Rector, Sir Lionel Somers, and André Desilles; for these three were much together now, for one thing had been clear to the Rector—it was absolutely impossible for André Desilles to stay with his cousin at Sheepsden. Again, another thing had become evident to the Rector—that it would be utterly inhospitable for him to allow the cousin of his old friend M. D'Isigny to stay at the Leeds Arms. Consequently, the Rector had insisted on André Desilles taking up his quarters at the Rectory.

Mrs. Rector had made a feeble little moan about having a Papist in the house, but not to her husband; she carried her little wail to old Lady Somers, and pointed out to her how terribly it would undermine her husband's influence to have a Papist, and he a Frenchman, in the house. Lady Somers advised her to make no objection.

"I," said the old lady, "am glad that my son should marry Mathilde, who is a Papist. It is not much, my dear, that you should yield in the matter of having her cousin into your house. I think that your husband is both weak and ungrateful. My husband gave him this living at my solicitation; and last month he turned against Lionel because he, as a Whig, should encourage a Nonconformist. Your husband refused to fish in my son's water; and I, of course, at once sent for my prayer-books. I have now received your husband again into favour, and have sent back my prayer-books, and shall leave them there until your husband repeats his offence of ingratitude. With regard to having a Papist in the family, I should advise you to yield: firstly, because it is your husband's wish; and, secondly, my dear, because you know that you

would give one of the eyes out of your head to have a Petre or a Weld to stay in your house."

Mrs. Rector gained but little from her conversation with this very strenuous old Whig lady; and went elsewhere for advice afterwards.

So André Desilles, the La Fayetteist, found himself the denizen of a respectable Philistine English rectory; a very strange arrangement, if you will think about it. The rectory way of making things go was a different one to any André had ever seen before. It puzzled him while it amused him; it must have seemed strange, even to a man who had been familiar with the extraordinary number of offices filled by the French clergy. In addition to his having the sole cure of souls of the parish of Stourminster Osborne, the Rector was a magistrate; nay, even chairman of the bench. Again, he was a scholar, and kept his scholarship alive. He was the busiest and most correct antiquarian in the west of England. Then again, since Sir George Somers had given him the living, he, by the death of his elder brother, had come into a good estate, of about two thousand a year. He was likewise a very fair sportsman. But André Desilles noticed, and

mentioned to Barbaroux, that the man seemed to fail in none of his positions. He was a good parson, a good antiquarian, a good magistrate, a good landlord; and moreover, a good husband.

"You do not know these English," said Desilles.

Barbaroux said: "Nor would I. A nation which, under Cromwell, was once free, now trodden under the heels of the worthless Norman aristocracy. I do not desire to know them."

"But they will beat us," said Desilles.

"It is possible," said Barbaroux, "but they will not beat democracy. Sleep well assured of that matter, my soldier."

It was perfectly necessary, considering the utter solitude of Mathilde's position, that Sir Lionel Somers should not be the acknowledged suitor of Mathilde. She was so perfectly defenceless and alone, that it was totally impossible that the matter could be talked about in any way. At least, this was Lady Somers' decision, and there was no appeal from it.

Sir Lionel's argument was that it would be fairer on her to give her the recognised position of his

fiancée, and there was a great deal in what he said. Still, however, Lady Somers carried the day.

"Before you spoke to her," she said, "I had no right to connect your name with hers. Now that you have spoken the irrevocable words, which I would not have unsaid, she has become, as it were, one of the family; and I, as mother of the family, can offer advice which I could not have given before. Before you spoke to her, I had no authority over your movements; now I claim some. In the very peculiar situation of the poor girl, deserted by both her natural guardians, I think that you should be exceedingly delicate, and should, in short, go to Sheepsdon as little as possible."

"While Desilles goes as much as he chooses," murmured Sir Lionel.

"I never thought to have heard an unworthy word from my son," said the old lady, drawing herself up rigidly; "and *that* word was unworthy of him. Mathilde has done you the highest honour which woman can do to man; and when you hint even indirectly that you are not sure of her faith, you show yourself unworthy of your name, and unworthy also of her."

"That is all very well, mother," still grumbled Sir Lionel; "but when a man is engaged to a French woman, he does not exactly like to have an exceedingly handsome Frenchman admitted to her society when he himself is banished. You would not like it yourself."

"He is her cousin," said Lady Somers.

"Confound him—yes! and he talks French like a nightingale. My French after his is like the gobbling of a turkey-cock. I wish he would go back to his regiment. I wish he was hung."

"If you distrust Mathilde, tell her so," said Lady Somers, getting still more on her dignity.

"Oh, hang it all, mother, I dare say you are right in the matter."

"I should suppose that I was. I have usually been considered an authority on these subjects."

"I do not pretend to doubt it. I have been a dutiful son to you, and will continue to be so. I will do as you desire. You know better than I what the cackling male idiots and foolish female busybodies who compose the population of this valley are likely to say. There, now, don't be angry; you have behaved most kindly in this

matter, and I thank you for it. The poor child, God help her, has no one but you. I will be guided by you, and be grateful. Can I say more?"

And so what threatened to be a slight disagreement went off in an embrace, and a few tears from Lady Somers. And the old lady was perfectly right: she knew what she was talking about. She had seen the splendid Frenchman with his cousin several times, and she saw that there was no danger. She nodded her old lace cap, and she said to herself, "If that had been going to happen, it would have happened long ago. She has got too used to him and his elegances. He is no more to her than her brother. There is no danger."

So the secret between Mathilde and Sir Lionel was supposed to be only known to them and to his mother. As for Mathilde, she kept it from André Desilles, because she was afraid of him, and still more afraid of his rigid, soldierly Catholicism: was afraid that he would quarrel with her for proposing to marry a Protestant. And she was so happy with him; for did he not sit and talk to her about France, and what was almost as good, in French: quote little jingles of French verse to her, so

delicious after the long, heavy, swinging Teutonic rhymes which her father had made her learn for penances. And he could see how she was dressed, which Lionel never could. He had been unkind to her once, but that was long ago. He was a Frenchman, and her own dear brother. She liked him, though she was afraid of him; but she loved Lionel best. André's was an old familiar face. She would as soon have thought of falling in love with old André as she would with Mrs. Bone. It was only old André, and who was he? Why, old disagreeable André. *Voilà tout!* Lady Somers was perfectly right.

Somebody has said that a woman always knows when a man is in love with her. It may be true in England, but I doubt if it is true in France. An Englishman certainly takes care that there should be no mistake about the matter. A Frenchman is, or was, so fearfully polite to every woman he meets, that the woman herself must get puzzled sometimes. Moreover, poor André's courtship was of such an extremely dignified nature, that Mathilde never saw anything of it at all. Once or twice she was a little puzzled about what made him so consistently kind

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to her, but she said, "He has come to me with his kind heart, because I am all alone, when every one had left me;" and very nearly determined to tell him the words which Sir Lionel Somers had said to her—but was afraid, because Lionel was a Protestant.

His company was a great delight to her. But alas for poor André! He was left terribly in the dark.

One thing was evidently necessary for Sir Lionel to do. He must inform her father of his position towards his daughter. What, then, was M. D'Isigny's address? He asked Mathilde. She had not the least idea, and so he simply wrote to him as deputy to the *National Assembly*.

"Do you never correspond, then?" asked Sir Lionel.

"Oh, never now. They have all left me alone, except my dear old André, who has come in his kindness to talk French to me. Lionel, will you do me a favour? It is the first I have ever asked you."

"I will do it."

"Try to like André. I assure you that he is

worthy of you ; he is so very good and noble, and I have been unfair and unjust to him all my life. He offended me once, and I never forgave him until lately. I was utterly in the wrong, as he has proved by being the only one who came to me when I was alone. That, Lionel, is what makes me so tender and affectionate with him now, and I do love him so very dearly, Lionel, and I have used him so badly all his life. Do try, for my sake, to like him."

"I do like him very much. If he will give me his friendship, God knows he shall have mine. But, Mathilde, are you never afraid that he loves you?"

"How?"

"Are you not afraid that he loves you?"

"Loves me?—He loves me entirely. Would he have come here to see me if he had not loved me? He loves me very dearly, and I am proud of his love. *His* love is worth having."

"I mean this," said Sir Lionel, very slowly, "are you not afraid of his loving you too much for his—peace of mind?"

Mathilde stared at him. "Do you mean loves

me sentimentally? That he loves me in the same way as you do?" pointing her finger at him.

"I meant that, certainly."

"Why, then, see what it is not to understand the other's language. My dear Lionel, you talk ridiculous, I assure you. Old André, then—listen—André and I have had a long quarrel, and it was all because he said, years ago, that I was so ugly that it gave him pain to see me play."

Mathilde rose at this point, and spread the fingers of one hand before Sir Lionel's face, she paused also for one instant, and then went on—

"He said that—or those two others, he and she, Louis and Adèle, you know—*said* that he had said it. Perhaps he did not, for they can be very false those two, Lionel. I would die for them, but they can be very false. They told me that he said that, and I enraged myself against him, for I am not ugly; have you not yourself told me that I am beautiful?—your word is as good as his."

There was no mistake about her beauty now, even to her, for she saw the reflection of it in the face of Sir Lionel, as in a glass.

"That is right; you confirm your words by your

eyes. But he never thought as you think. He always thought me half *crétin*, an object of pity. Beside, again, he is my brother. Beside, once more again, Lionel, you do not know him. His heart is not for woman, oh, you blind! He is priest. He is, if necessary, martyr! Do you not see it in his face?—and for him to love me sentimentally, my old, cross brother André; bah! For me, I love sentimentally only you. I now really think that you were the first, and you shall be the last.”

So Mathilde, to the entire satisfaction of Sir Lionel. But Mrs. Bone and William had other opinions. While Sir Lionel was waiting for his answer from D’Isigny, he decorously followed his mother’s advice, and went very little to Sheepsden. But André Desilles went, and Mrs. Bone and William used to hear them, and see them talking over the fire, in French. And Mrs. Bone remarked to William that their voices were like the chiming of silver bells.

CHAPTER VIII.

BARBOT'S FIRST REVENGE.

It seems to me, in any good story which I have ever read, that there is a kind of pause, or breaking line, about the middle of it. The author, in spite of himself, puts his causes before you in the first half of his story, and gives you the effect of them in the second. I do not know a readable story, which does not fulfil this rule. I fancy it is the great rule of story-telling. It is certainly so well recognised, that some experienced novel readers omit the ceremony of reading the second volume of a three-volume novel, as old playgoers are in the habit of having a quiet game at billiards during the second act of a new three-act play.

I would have provided for my audience a quiet time of this kind, when they might, to use the theatrical simile, have had in their ices, and talked

to their friends; but I fear I cannot. I have cast the time of my story in the times of the French Revolution: and there can be no pause, no peace, with a story which begins in 1789.

In solitary Sheepsden, folded among the calm Dorsetshire hills, one might have thought that there was peace, if there could be peace anywhere. Winter came down, and shrouded the Down with its winter's snow—yet there was little peace there. André Desilles and Mathilde were at cross purposes; Sir Lionel and Desilles did not understand their relations towards one another; and Desilles' time was getting short.

He had every reason for encouragement; he thought that he had nothing to do but to speak. He knew what had been the relations between Sir Lionel and Adèle. He never dreamt that there were any similar relations between Mathilde and Sir Lionel. His idea was, that he had only to speak the word to Mathilde, and that she would fly to his arms, or do something of that sort;—that he could have her when he chose. He did not want to hurry her; he knew that she had at one time some sort of prejudice against him. Yet she was so

affectionate, and so gentle and loving towards him ; and Sir Lionel and his mother kept their secret, like English people, so uncommonly well, that he never guessed it.

If he had known English, he would have heard of the relations between Mathilde and Sir Lionel very quickly ; but English was a mere barbarous jargon to him, which he could not learn. He was as much isolated from his species as a deaf and dumb man. The people who spoke French to him, were—Mathilde, who did not wish him to know about her relations to Sir Lionel ; Sir Lionel, who was still jealous of him ; Lady Somers, who twittered out her little Frenchisms with a perfect accent, like an aged piping bullfinch who has nearly forgotten his art ; and the Rector, who spoke French like a bulldog. He begged the Rector to teach him English colloquially, so that he might escape the Rector's French—it was so fearfully painful ; but the Rector only retorted on him, by asking him to talk in English while he spoke in French, as that was the best way of mutual improvement. So poor André had really no chance of hearing the truth. The only man, beside these four, who ever spoke to

him in French, was his servant, Barbot. So André, until just before his departure, had no doubt whatever that he had only to speak a few words to Mathilde, to be accepted. He did not want to hurry her in any way, and so put off the speaking of them until they were never spoken. The man who prevented those words from being spoken was Sergeant Barbot, the man whom he had brought with him as a servant, because he was the most dangerous man in the Régiment du Roi.*

Mathilde was very particular about this man. She asked William, as a particular favour, to be very attentive to him; and William, of course, was so. When he was left alone together with Barbot, William instantly came to the conclusion that there were two kinds of Frenchmen; the one like D'Isigny, Desilles, and De Valognes, the other like Barbot and Marat. The one the most elegant person in the world, to whom Sir Lionel was a cart-horse, the other hideous, wild, and strange beyond understanding. There was a wild, lurid light in

* I have chosen my name unluckily. This dreadful Sergeant was no relation whatever of the charming and kind Madame Barbot, of Dol.

the red eyes of Marat and of Barbot, which William could not understand.

When Barbot was first left in William's care, they soon found out that neither understood the other's language. William was puzzled at first to know what to do, but he, after a moment's consideration, went through the pantomime of drinking. Barbot understood *that*, and they went to the public-house together.

William was no glass-breaker, merely taking his modest pint of beer ; Barbot, like most of the inferior agents of the French revolution, vacillated between alternate doses of strong tobacco and raw brandy. William thought that French gentlemen kept curious servants, and consoled himself by thinking that probably they could not get better. He told his beloved confidant, Mrs. Bone, that he was surprised to see such a real gentleman as Mr. Desilles, with such an exceedingly "ornery"* servant as Barbot. There was a curious light in Barbot's eyes, which William was unable to under-

* "Ornery,"—with which word the English public are now mainly familiar from Artemus Ward—is an expression as old as the hills in Hampshire. It is merely a corruption for "ordinary."

stand, but which he did not like. Still Barbot had been committed to his care by Mathilde, and he was civil to him.

They used thus to drink together at the Leeds Arms. André Desilles, who hated the very sight of the man, and had only taken him as his servant, in order to get him away from the regiment, had quartered him in the village. William used periodically to pay for his drink, and Barbot used to drink it, while William sat and looked on.

William was sitting and looking on at Barbot drinking one night, when he felt some one tug the hair at the top of his head. Looking up to see who had taken this very strange liberty, he looked up into the handsome face of Martin, the old poacher.

William laughed, and Martin facetiously boxed his ears; after which he sat down beside William, and then setting his keen, hawklike hazel eye on Barbot, to William's unutterable astonishment, began talking French to him.

William knew that Martin, the poacher, had been a soldier at one time; had been a prisoner at one time; but he had never had the very dimmest idea that old Martin could talk French. He was

stricken with astonishment, and sat with open mouth, while those two very strange beings,—Barbot, the French democrat, and Martin, the English poaching loafer, the man who had nothing to lose and little to gain—interchanged ideas. I must translate for them.

Martin said: “You have a good service, and seem to thrive on it. I was prisoner in France once, and in those times service was bad, unless—” I will pause here; Martin went into details which are unnecessary.

Barbot said: “You do not seem to thrive on your service. Your master is a hard one.” For indeed old Martin’s “turn out” in the way of clothes was very far from impressive.

“I have no master,” said Martin. “If I had submitted to a master, I could have been in a good farm. But I could not.”

Barbot came round to his side of the table at once. “Then, I suppose,” he said, “that you are one of those who are going to do as we are going to do.”

To which Martin answered, rather provokingly, “*Quoi donc !*”

“What!” said Barbot, in a fury at once. “What! Why rise against them,—against these masters? Who, then, should have a master at all? What do they with the land? The land is ours. They are mere robbers and thieves, debauched by every vice. Take from them this land, then! Wrest it from them!”

“But what would they have to live on,” asked Martin the poacher, “if you took the land from them?”

“Live?” said Barbot. “Why should they live? Let them die! Do as we are going to do: cut them off, and take possession.”

“There seems some sense in that,” said Martin. “What would you propose, for instance, in the case of Sir Lionel Somers?”

“Assassination. Our French aristocracy are intolerable, but your English aristocracy are more brutally insolent. Sir Lionel Somers walks often, and alone. You know the use of a gun; and you seem *repandu* among the wretched peasantry. He has prosecuted you for killing his game. Your chance at him is continual. Do you not see your advantage? If there were a thousand

such as you in England, the cause would be secure."

"But there aint," said Martin to himself. To Barbot he said—"You think, then, that the best way to begin would be for me to shoot Sir Lionel Somers?"

"It would be a good beginning," said Barbot; "a great example."

"Yet we should miss him in hard winters," said Martin, "not to mention his mother; and winters are devilish hard in these parts, comrade; and they come in very convenient, do these lords and ladies. They are very kind."

"Curse them! I know it," said Barbot.

"I have no doubt you do," said Martin. "You seem to hate them so very strongly that I very much suspect you have had a favour or two from them. Well, *bon soir!* I will think over this proposition of yours about killing Sir Lionel. If I find my prejudices go against it, perhaps *you* will take it in hand? Let me know when you are going to do it, because I should like to see the job done."

Barbot said, "Who am I, in a foreign country, to undertake such a thing? Who is he to me?"

Are there not two hundred and fifty thousand aristocrats at home?"—So Martin said, "Then you had better leave the job to me;" and Barbot said, "Certainly." And so separated.

"You have got into nice company, young man," remarked Martin to William, when Barbot had gone; "uncommon nice company, upon my word. For a respectable young man, hailing from these parts, I don't see you could have got into worse."

"I doubt he is no good," said William.

"You need not doubt," said Martin.

"What has he been talking about to you in French?" asked William.

"Murder," said old Martin.

William sat aghast; and repeated, "Murder! Who does he want to murder?"

To which old Martin replied, very vaguely, "All the whole lot."

"Then is there no particular young woman in the business, then?" asked William, whose ideas of murder as an art were derived from the only cases which had come under his knowledge; that of a young man who had murdered his sweetheart, and idiotically hidden her body in a saw-pit; and of a

young woman who had murdered her baby out of spite.

“Young woman!” said old Martin, almost contemptuously. “What does such as he want with young women? I mean murder wholesale. Murder of the whole lot of the gentlefolks.”

“What the deuce would be the good of that?” asked William.

“The poor folks would get the land,” answered Martin, with his shrewd old eye on William.

“And what the deuce would they do with it when they got it?” answered William. “They’ve got no money to farm it with, and it would pretty soon fall back into the hands of them as had. This lot of landowners are well enough; let ’em bide. You might get a worse lot in their place.”

“We will talk about that again, old boy,” said Martin, the old poacher. “I knew you were all right, but I want to speak to you about this Frenchman. We have no call to grumble against the French, for there is M. D’Isigny and Mademoiselle his daughter; but I tell you some of the French are devils alive, and this Barbot is one. Why, what is wrote in his face?”

William, though interested in the conversation and anxious to prolong it, was unable to say what was written on Barbot's face.

"Why, murderer!" said old Martin. "Bill, listen to me. You asked me what he had been saying to me in French, and I will tell you. He was asking me to murder Sir Lionel Somers."

William moved quickly; the thing was so incredible to him. He little dreamt to what place his fate would ultimately lead him; little thought that he should take a human life himself; still less thought *whose* life, but he was extremely agitated (if such an expression can be made with regard to a young and stolid English horse-minder) at the idea of the assassination of Sir Lionel Somers. Sir Lionel was the man of whom they were all so proud, the favourite of the valley, in spite of all his fallings away in the direction of Romanism and dissent; these poor peasants were foolish enough to love the man. And now here had come a Frenchman who had proposed to old Martin that he should be murdered. To ask a Martin to murder a Somers! William turned his eyes on the old poacher inquiringly.

Martin went on, and William's face was quite close to his.

"That Frenchman, Bill, proposed to me, you sitting there and not getting up and breaking his back, that I should shoot down Sir Lionel!"

"How could I have broke his back—he is a stronger man than me—and me not knowing French?" asked William.

"There is a deal in that," said old Martin. "That is true, that is. But what odds; that Frenchman wanted to egg me on to murder him."

"But there's no odds between you and Sir Lionel," said the very much puzzled William.

"Odds betwixt me and he!" said the old poacher; "no, except on my side. I aint been fair to him, Bill; I've poached out his trout; I groped out they trout that he kicked up a row about last month. My dear young man, don't you get looking too much at they dratted trout, or you won't be able to keep your hands off them. I can't; I would risk my life after them; I can't help it."

William said, in some form or another, that Martin should try if he felt himself in any way able, to get over this temptation.

Martin said in reply, "That is all very well for you; you have never been tempted in this way. You have been brought up among they horses, and your temptations lies among they; they are the curse of England, they horses. I don't say that you would go as far as to steal a horse, as I could steal a trout; but if you found a sound piece of turf you would *gallop* a horse when you was sent out with orders to walk him; much as I would go stark naked, old as I am, into a stream, in December, after one of they trout."

The old man was getting discursive, and to a certain extent personal; William recalled him.

"About this Barbot, this Frenchman?" asked William.

"Well, Bill, he has proposed that I should shoot Sir Lionel. You are a young man, and a simple man, and don't understand Revolution."

"What is that?" asked William.

"Blessed if I exactly know myself," said Martin. "But the Revolutionists don't seem sharp to me. For him to ask me to shoot Lionel!"

"But you wouldn't do it, you know," said William.

“I taught him to swim, I taught him to shoot flying, I taught him the main of all the learning he has got, and then this Frenchman comes and wants me to shoot him. Poor Lionel! He and my Bob were born the same week——”

William said nothing now, with the instinct of a gentleman, and indeed Martin paused. They were on very delicate ground. Robert Martin had been the only blot on the family escutcheon. To say that he had *got* into bad company would be incorrect, as none of the Martins were ever in good. But the Martins had always kept on the sunny side of the hedge with regard to the law, except on the question of poaching. Now this unhappy lad, Robert Martin, had nearly broken his father's heart by marrying a gipsy woman. This was bad enough, but worse came of it. One of his brothers-in-law stole a sheep, and Robert, as a matter of civility to his wife's brother more than for any other reason, received the carcass. They were convicted together, and under the cruel old laws were both *hung* at Dorchester. I am not “fighting extinct Satans,” as Mr. Carlyle says, when I mention this fact. I am merely trying to give an

idea of the state of society then; to give some idea of the extraordinary way in which the doctrine of obedience had worked itself into the English mind at that time. We should not utterly despise this instinct of obedience, for it gave us Trafalgar. At the Nore there was an attempt at rebellion, but habit, mere habit, quelled the mutiny, when the mutineers had won.

Old Martin, a hater of all laws, had lived under these cruel laws, and had lost a son under them. Let us see, for curiosity's sake, how he spoke of the class who made them and enforced them.

"My Bob," said the old man, "was always a favourite with Sir Lionel. When he got into his trouble, Sir Lionel was up and down, night and day, to see him through it. But, Lord bless you! forty Sir Lionels weren't no good at all. The sheep's life was took, and the farmers would have my boy's life for the sheep's: and the farmers got my boy's blood for their sheep's blood. And Lionel, he come to my place, and read the funeral service, him and me, the time my boy Bob was hanging at Dorchester; and now this French devil

comes and wants me to murder he. Why, I would have as lief murdered you."

I hope certain people will not pronounce the above to be what they please to call vulgar. It is pretty *true*, which is something. What saved a general Jacquerie here the last ten years of the last century was the simple fact that our upper classes had contracted habits of friendship and familiarity with the peasants. D'Isigny pointed that out before. That is all past and gone. I am merely writing for the past, and expressing no opinions, only speaking of what venerable gentlemen have told me were facts. Will you hear Martin again? I honestly think that I am not misleading you in bringing his voice out of the past.

"There's Lionel. He has not used me as well as he might. He had no call to kick up a row about they darned trout a month ago," continued the old man, unable to forget Sir Lionel's last cause of offence. "I can't keep my hands off they darned trout, and he knows it. I suppose it's a instinct which Providence has put in me. Bill, I tell you, as a respectable young man without that instinct, that I can't keep my hands from them.

He knowed it well enough; but for he and the Rector to go along at me about they trout was not fair."

"They were *his* trout, you know," said William, quietly.

"So I believe," said Martin. "I will say no more about them. But, look here. Lionel came to me, when my boy was hanging at Dorchester, and he read the service; and we cried together, we two. And now that — Frenchman could have me murder him. That Frenchman wants watching, and you are the one to watch him."

"You would be the best; you are always round with Sir Lionel."

"*He* won't touch *him*. *He* has no grudge against him. *It's his own master*, I tell-ee—that young Frenchman, Desilles. Can't you warn him of what I have told you?"

William nodded his head. "Will you drink with me, Master Martin?" he said.

"Ah! I dearly love my drop of drink," said the old man. "You was always a civil and dutiful young man. I am getting to feel the rheumatics, and a drop of drink puts life into me now, though I

cared little about it when I was young. I am a poor old vagabond, and I ain't done much good; but I can care for them as are kind to me as well as a better one."

Sir Lionel was walking calmly up and down in the Rector's garden, when William approached him and entered into conversation. He pointed out to him that he had better take some precautions, had better use the law, for that Barbot was a declared assassin.

Desilles put his two hands on William's two shoulders, and looked, with sad and tender eyes, gently into his face. "Dear young man," he said, "I thank you very much for this, though I have known it a very, very long time. But I am safe from him; he knows no mercy, and so he will let me live. You do not understand? No. Good-bye, and thank you. Good-bye!"

And so he departed, leaving William wondering; and William never saw him again, for that morning Barbot had had his revenge for the words he had overheard on the rocks of St. Malo. He had taken André Desilles down a thick pleached alley in the rectory garden, and had shown him Sir Lionel and

Mathilde. Her head was on her lover's bosom, and he was playing with her hair. With one deep sob, and only one, André Desilles turned away; and Barbot saw that his dagger had gone home to the noble heart, hilt deep.

CHAPTER IX.

SILENCE THAT DREADFUL BELL.

"HERE," said André Desilles to the Skipper, "there is at least peace." And the Skipper said in reply, "Hm? Is there peace on that rock, think you?" And pointed to Mont St. Michel.

The little brig in which André Desilles had taken passage from Poole to St. Malo had been driven too far east in a smart gale of wind, and was now making up her westing. The sea had not gone down; but they were very lazily and comfortably toiling on, reeling, rolling, and diving before the gentle easterly wind. To their left, with the hills of the *bocage* behind it, lay Avranches, a line of white houses, topped by the grandest of all cathedrals* in the land of cathedrals—Normandy.

* Since utterly destroyed to the very last stone; not, however, by the Revolutionists. It fell, I believe, by decay.

arer, the dim smoke rising from little Pontorson, close by, rising from green sea and yellow sand, a hundred and fifty feet in air, with the free sea birds skimming around it, rose the glorious and mighty stone flower which they call Mont St. Michel.

"Not much peace even here, monsieur," said the prisoner, resuming. "You won't find much peace in France anywheres for a year or two, in prison or out of prison, I doubt. It's the king's prisoners as are biting at them bars just now. There'll be more prisoners soon."

So said the honest English sailor, and André said nothing. No, indeed; there was but little chance of peace for him. He had had his last peace in the two months at Sheepsden. During that time he had scarcely realised what was going on in France. Mathilde had been his siren, and he had slept. This rude and noble old Hatchway wattle had roused him.

Do you know the infinite value of a sailor's fitness? Do you appreciate the extraordinary value of the outspoken truthfulness of a really fine sailor? A soldier will never lie, but he tells the

truth, by the tradition of his profession, so very gently and so politely, that you miss the point (unless you are of his mess—the truth is told boldly enough at the mess-table). Now, my sailor tells the blunt, plain truth in a most disagreeable manner very often, whenever he sees occasion, in a way which I can only liken to a green sea walking in over your bulwarks. Nobody likes it; but it is not bad for them.

He had taken a fancy to this rude old English sailor when he had first got on board, and had told him much—more than an Englishman would have been likely to tell—quite enough, indeed, to make the shrewd, gentle old man understand matters. When he had told him all, the Skipper (a Dorsetshire man, who knew the parties) had said somewhat bluffly, “Well, sir, my opinion is, that you had better have stuck to the ship, and not gone ashore after the young lady. If you undertake to do a thing, sir, do it. You undertook your company in the Régiment du Roi, and you went philandering after that saint of a woman (I know her), and left your men to take care of themselves. You will live to regret it.”

That was the first thing which this quaint old English Skipper said to arouse André. André had been getting but little intelligence from France, while this old fellow had been going to and fro. André had been asleep. The old man had told him about burning châteaux, and other matters of which we cannot speak; and André, when they were sailing past Mont St. Michel, had said, "There is peace here, at all events." And the old sea-dog had answered as above.

"Peace, sir?" continued the Skipper; "Who are you that you should either desire or deserve peace? Look at that Mont St. Michel, there. The French priest whom I have carried over lately, Mr. Martin, told me how to admire it: he says there is not such a thing in Europe. Very like; I am glad to hear it. It is beautiful enough; but it would look prettier, in my mind, without the white fingers of the captives clawing at the bars. And you talk of peace! Talk about furious resistance to the death;—talk about blood, and fire, and fury; but don't let me hear any French gentleman talk about peace. That time has gone by, sir. I have sailed from Poole to Cherbourg and St. Malo too

long, sir, not to know. I hear the wharfmén and stevedores talking as they unload my cargo; and their talk is about you, and such as you, sir; and they hate you with a deep and desperate hatred. Your order is doomed."

The conversation then turned again on the progress of the Revolution; and André once more saw that he had been asleep; that the conflagration had come without his knowing it. Still, all day they sailed quietly on until Mont St. Michel was only a pearl-gray cloud and a recollection, and the low Rochers de Cancale lay eastward from them, jagged as the Bernese Oberland, black as Fogo, and they sighted the innumerable granite islands in the bay of St. Malo, on the largest of which Chateaubriand now lies buried.

"And there," said André Desilles, "is my dear old home. You would like St. Malo, Captain."

"Should I?" said the Skipper. "Oh! I don't much think I should at the present moment. Can you make out the colour of that flag at the battery?"

"How curious. They have got a red flag up," said André.

"Ah! they've got a red flag up," said the Skipper. "You never said a truer word than that in your life. Now, Bob," he continued to the man at the wheel, "don't go a-writing your name with the ship.* There is eight knots of stream and a strong northerly suck of wind. Mind your — ship."

"I was a-looking at that there flag," growled Bob; "and a-waiting for they to run up the bunting for a pilot."

"Mind your ship," retorted the Skipper. "If you don't know the channel yet, I can show it to you. Close the Tour Solidor with the round hill inland, and run her straight up the Rance on the tide. That is all the pilotage *you'll* get."

Bob was an old man-of-war's man, and said, "You are putting her right under that old battery at Dinard."

"We will chance that," said the Skipper.

"What's the good?" said Bob. "I'd get her round now."

"Knowing what we have aboard?" asked the Skipper.

* Sailor's chaff for bad steering.

Bob swore, and put her at it.

"What does all this mean?" asked André.

"Revolution!" said the Skipper. "Put her at it, Bob."

The brig raced in on the tide, and André could see the rocks on which he had once sat with De Valognes quite plainly. The sea, raging and foaming, had nearly submerged them, and was rising every minute. He was thinking of how much had come and gone in so very few months, when he heard some one laughing behind him. It was Barbot, whose eyes were fixed on the same place. He moved away to the Skipper.

"Do you dread violence to your ship, then, my friend?" he said. "Our governments are not at war."

"But there is mischief in St. Malo," said the Skipper. "Listen."

He listened as the ship drove on, so close to shore that they could see that there were only three persons on the wharf under the walls: a feeble old blind woman, bowed by age, who felt her way with a stick; a drunken man, who danced wildly round by himself, fell against the wall, and then danced

again; and a quiet man, who angled with a rod and line in the rising tide for mullet. These were the only three to be seen upon the wharf. But over the heads of these, cling clang, cling clang, went ringing the sound of the cathedral bell, which only half deadened a dull sound of confusion which arose from the close streets, and which seemed to take the place of a dull, ill-sung bass to the maddening sharp treble of the bell.

“What is the meaning of this? What is that awful bell?” said André.

“Le tocsin, Monsieur le Capitaine,” said Barbot, who was at his elbow. “The people have declared. Voilà tout. Enfin!”

CHAPTER X.

M. D'ISIGNY MEETS STRANGE COMPANY.

I SHOULD be inclined to think that in the history of the whole French Revolution there was scarcely a man who did less, or who influenced other people less, than M. D'Isigny. He was a precisionist and a bully; and, if I may be allowed to remark about anything which I have seen, I should say that precisionists and bullies have infinitely less power than any other class of people going.

Is the moral of Aristides quite forgotten? D'Isigny was as good as Aristides; and when his little world grew old enough to think for themselves, they rose in rebellion against his goodness. They might possibly have stood his goodness, if he had not been such a bully. He would let them see that he was good on every occasion; and they, not being absolutely perfect, disliked it;—indeed, Adèle

rebelled. Mathilde took him as a matter of course, and went to bed every night lamenting and accusing herself, because she was not as good as her father. The Girondists were, some of them, dreadfully good, but

“Roland the Just, with ribands in his shoes,”

was not so dreadfully good as D'Isigny. I want you to understand that D'Isigny was a perfectly faultless and perfectly determined man; and also one who never made anyone do what he wanted them to do, with the exception of old Mathilde.

Now his wife; you shall see her, but I am not going to explain her. She said truly, when she said that Marat represented the fury of the Revolution; yet old Lady Somers, whose schoolfellow she was, never *hated* her. I am not Madame D'Isigny's apologist. Lady Somers used to say that she was a wild, violent, high-spirited woman, who had been driven into her almost maniac state of fury by her husband's precisionism. She is a ghastly character, and I will deal with her as little as I can until——. The spectacle of a furious old woman—still calling herself Protestant, cut off from the ties of religion,

home, country, family, husband—is not a pleasant one. I love to write about pleasant things, and the contemplation of a coarse, half-maddened Tory Englishwoman, in the scenes of the French Revolution, is not pleasant. *Her* intense *apparent* dislike of her husband, and *Mathilde's* intense devotion to her father—one and the same person—is, to a certain extent, worthy of notice.

D'Isigny went stalking about Paris, in his new rôle of a deputy, admired by every one for his extremely noble appearance, and well put-on dress. Admired by every one, but by none so much as himself. There was never a pie but his fingers were in it. There was never a plot but what he heard of twenty-four hours before it ever entered in the mind of another man to conceive anything so foolish. We shall have more to do with him afterwards. He went about button-holing and boring every one; a fussy politician, who believed that he was pulling the bell-rope, while he was only trying to make the bell itself shake. So good, kind M. D'Isigny went up and down Paris, saying to himself: "Mirabeau can't last. He was *ébloui* at dinner yesterday, and he was extremely short in

his answers, even to me. His temper is going with his health. I shall not have to wait long."

"Dickens, George Eliot, and me;" I heard, said on one occasion. D'Isigny had fully persuaded himself that Mirabeau out of the way, he was the man who would be summoned to save France.

He was as brave as a lion; nay, he was as brave as a tiger, which is more. Yet one morning in this dark winter he got a letter which tested all his courage. It was dated ominously from the Rue Jacquerie (now swept away by Boulevard de Décembre, down which your rifled cannon can go, blasting away revolution); but in the winter of 1789, it was not a quarter of the town into which a decently-dressed man cared to go. The letter, dated from such a dangerous place, was very emphatic. That was nothing to D'Isigny, *he* could be as emphatic as any one; but it was an appeal *ad misericordiam* from a sick man, for assistance. That was an appeal which he never could resist; good works among the poor had been a habit of his family for generations. So he started on this,—to a man of his very aristocratic appearance,—very dangerous errand of mercy.

He did not know who had sent to him. The letter was merely signed, "One who loves your daughter." I think that he would have gone without this personal appeal.

So he started on foot, with nothing to defend him but a riding-whip. That he could not have gone into St. Antoine one knows; but this was a quarter a little more respectable than St. Antoine; yet one which would turn out to the tocsin scarcely a quarter of an hour later than St. Antoine itself. It was a dangerous journey. Bailly, to whom he spoke of it, told him that he should disguise himself, and go *en polisson*, if he *would* go; but D'Isigny never condescended to *that*.

He stalked on through the rapidly-narrowing streets until the people began to observe him. At first they were silent, and merely stood out of his way. But the fatal word "aristocrat" was passed on quicker than he could walk, and the squalid wild crowd, in the hideous filthy street, divided before him, and ranged itself on what should have been the *trottoir*, in a way that D'Isigny did not, as a practical man, like.

D'Isigny had heard—nay, D'Isigny knew—that

drunkenness prevailed to a very great extent in St. Antoine; but looking at the awful wall of quiet faces which fenced his way, saw that there was no drunkenness among them. These people were of an order above St. Antoine. They were sober enough, dangerously sober, but they were, if such an utter confusion of metaphor may be allowed, calmly infuriated.

Not a single drunken man for a thousand in St. Antoine. Only one, whom D'Isigny may thank. There was a drunken giant, fearfully *ivre*, who carried a child of three years old in his arms. This fellow, reeling from his sober companions to insult D'Isigny, tripped on the rough pavement, and cast the child heavily on the ground.

D'Isigny had it in his arms in a moment. "Mon pauvre petit! Mon cher petit! Regardez donc, et ne pleurnichez pas.

" Madame About viendra,
Avec ses gâteaux et noix,
Et sous son tablier tiendra
Les objets de choix."

So he sang aloud to the quiet little face which lay on his arm, too quiet to please him.

“Mon dieu! I am afraid it is dead. C’est impossible! Madame, I beg you to approach,” he went on with a gentle appealing face to a tall, gaunt woman who was nearest to him. “The child is seriously hurt or else dead. I pray you assist me.”

There were a dozen women round him at once; the quarrel between the two orders was so heavy now that they had hesitated to approach him for one instant; the women carried off the child, and the word was passed that it was dead.

D’Isigny was now surrounded by a wild, gaunt crowd of men, and gave himself up for lost. He was very much mistaken, indeed. The eldest among them spoke first.

“Patriots, this man is no aristocrat. This man is not of the breed of De Retz, or De Sade. He is no monster. He is a good citizen, this man, and is tender and humane.”

“I am an extremely good citizen, my dear friends,” said D’Isigny, who though brave as a tiger, thought, that under the circumstances, there could be no harm in being on his best behaviour. There was a murmur of acclamation.

“And where is the patriot going, then?” said a

very advanced patriot indeed, shoving his way to the front : a gentleman who appeared to have stolen a ragged blue blouse, a ragged pair of black trousers, and an odd pair of sabots, and with no other garments than these : a man who looked like a lunatic who had escaped, and had stolen his two only articles of dress from a broken-down butcher. This man repeated, "Where is the patriot with the fine clothes, and the silver-handled whip, going, then ? He has been in great danger, this citizen. Where is he going ?"

"I am going, my dear friends," said D'Isigny, "to Numero Seize, Rue Jacquerie."

If one of that very advanced patriot Orsini's bombs had fallen among these patriots, it could scarcely have caused a greater effect. They started and stared, and quick words of intelligence, inaudible to D'Isigny, passed among them. "I am going to have an adventure," he thought.

"I am no De Sade or De Retz," he said ; "I am, as you saw, deeply grieved by this unhappy accident. I have once lost a child myself, and I deeply feel, also, for all your sufferings. I am bound on an errand of mercy now. Will any

kind citizen guide me to Numero Seize, Rue Jacquerie ?”

It was singular to see how the greatest black-guard among them all instantly assumed the command. The patriot who seemed to have strayed out of St. Antoine, and who looked like a lunatic butcher, instantly gave the word, “Follow then, citizen,” and was submitted to by the others, and by D’Isigny himself. They were, he noticed, comparatively respectable people round; but this horrible man was evidently their master, and his. He followed him.

The crowd stared strangely as they passed along to see such a figure as that of D’Isigny following such an one as that of the man who led him. Yet they did not molest him in any way. The story of the child had passed on among them, and with that frightful figure as his escort, he was safer than with a squadron of dragoons.

Clop, clop, went the sabots over the heavy stones, and the man seldom looked back. They soon left the larger street, and got into a labyrinth of narrower and narrower streets, from which D’Isigny doubted if he could ever extricate himself. At last

the man stopped, and rang a bell at a low, mean, and very dangerous-looking door.

It was opened by a wild-looking woman of some thirty years. Before the man had time to say anything, one of the strangest-looking women ever seen came out, and said, hurriedly, "Is that M. D'Isigny?"

The strangest woman! Dressed like a Swiss of some canton or another, D'Isigny could not tell of which; with short petticoats, banded hair, and a strange provincial head-dress, white stockings and low shoes, neat and clean as she could be; a strange contrast to the dowdy woman who had opened the door. Such a strange little face, restless, wild, yet tender and piquant, with eyes which attracted his own, and made him set his handsome thin lips as a man does in the effort of memory.

D'Isigny bowed to her in acknowledgment. She said, "Come in, Monsieur. Jean Bon," to the patriot, "I thank you. Go." And the patriot went. D'Isigny went in, and the door was shut behind him.

The dowdy woman disappeared into a room from which there came a smell of cooking—he fancied,

principally of onions. The young Swiss woman led him up a rotten old staircase, and pausing at the top, before a door, said, "Go in; he knows that you are come. Don't irritate him, he is really ill."

He was determined not to flinch in his adventure now. He turned the handle of the door and went in, seeing in an instant that he was among the patriots with a vengeance.

It was a large room, but very squalid; and in the corner was a bed with a sick man in it. Besides the sick man there was only one other person in the room, a young man, about thirty, who confronted him; D'Isigny saying to himself, "Now I wonder who *you* may be." A middle-sized young man, with a high narrow forehead, a long, thin, hooked nose, and a loose, restless mouth. His long hair fell down over the high collar of his swallow-tailed coat. He was not badly dressed, and looked like a gentleman, holding himself very upright, and though slight of figure, seemed almost athletic. One of the first things which D'Isigny noticed about him was his extreme restlessness; his body was never at ease, but was always in an attitude.

He was by way of passing D'Isigny to go out, and D'Isigny calmly drew on one side, raising his hat, to make room for him. The bow was not returned, and the young man was passing on, when a voice from the bed, which made D'Isigny start, said,—

“Do not go, Camille Desmoulins; I have nothing to say to him but what you may hear.”

D'Isigny advanced at once to the bed, and looked down on the sick man. It was Marat.

The pillow was white and clean, for the Swiss woman his sister, the sister who lived so long, had ordered things well for him, as much as Madame the Dowdy would allow her. And on that pillow lay that terrible head soon to be the most deeply loved and the most deeply detested in France. “Hideous?” D'Isigny thought: “Yes. Powerful?—Yes. Beautiful? No. Well,” thought D'Isigny, “it is certainly *bizarre*, and that is one form of beauty.”

The head was quiet on its pillow, and it was laughing, which some said was a more terrible time at which to see it than when it scowled. D'Isigny, on this occasion, did not think so. Although the

complexion was deadly, the lips were gasping, and the terrible fell of hair was half covering its forehead; he did not feel the deadly shrinking from the head that he had felt before, in England; the laugh was almost pleasant. He was puzzled beyond measure, and considering to whom he was speaking, what he said was almost comic.

"M. Marat, I deeply regret to see you indisposed."

Marat laughed again.

"I knew I could fetch you here. A mystery or an errand of mercy would fetch you anywhere. Now I hate you, and I hate errands of mercy—or, at least, what *you* call errands of mercy. You, with your handsome clothes and your handsome face, are an abomination to me. I have brought you here to revile you, and to tell you ill news. News which will make you eat your heart."

D'Isigny was the gentleman and the Christian in an instant. He was on his mettle.

"M. Marat, you are disturbed by your sickness. I have never offended you."

"Bah!" said Marat. "Look at this fellow,

then. He acts gentleman to me—to *me!*—by heavens, to *me!* Me, who hate a gentleman as I hate a toad or a serpent. If I could get up, I would kill you.”

He ended his address in a tone of voice which it would not be unfair to call a scream.

Camille Desmoulins came quickly over from the window in which he had been standing, and laid his hand quietly on Marat's forehead.

The fit of shrieking fury was soon succeeded by a reaction. “Camille,” he said, “kiss me. This man has irritated me beyond bearing. I received favours at the hand of this man when I was in England; and they were thrown to me like a bone to a dog. I brought him here to-night for amusement partly, because I know he thinks that he can save his soul by charity, and I had ill news to tell him. And he has behaved like a gentleman, and he has never said one single word of the favours he did me. And I hate you, and will have your head,” he added to M. D'Isigny, quite quietly now, for Camille Desmoulins' hand was in his hair.

“M. Marat is excited and feverish, I fear,” said

D'Isigny. "I am not aware of any cause of quarrel between myself and M. Marat."

"Coals of fire on my head!" cried Marat. "That is the old Christian trick," he cried. "See here, D'Isigny; let me see if I can exasperate you. Our people in Brittany have burnt down your château and pillaged your estate. I had you here to give you the good news."

"Jean, I hope it was not by your orders," said Camille Desmoulins.

"Not by my order, Camille. No," said Marat. "I would have spared him. But when it had happened, I thought that I should like to see his cursed cold proud face flinch for an instant, and so I sent for him. And, curse him, it won't flinch."

"He is behaving like a true gentleman and a good man," said Camille. "You are *enragé*."

"Not quite," said Marat. "See, then. If I hate him, I love his daughter. You, *man*, D'Isigny, mark me in this. I know more than you all. Mathilde loved me for my own sake—loved me, because I loved the people. It is not for your sake that I say this, it is for hers. You are all going to the devil together. I know the temper of the

people; but I would save her, for I love her, Christian as she is. Now, mark me. If you allow her to set foot in France, she may perish with the rest of you. Mind that you are not her murderer."

CHAPTER XI.

LA GARAYE AGAIN.

MARAT's news about the burning of the château was perfectly true. Madame of Dinan had got herself burnt out of her husband's château. The act was an unpopular one in that part of Brittany, as those who did it found to their cost afterwards; for this very furious lady was famed far and wide for deeds of charity, and the country was only gazing at the revolution. Yet it was done, and Madame the Furious was in an old house belonging to her husband, in an alley which takes off to the right, above the gateway, halfway up the Rue Jesouil at Dinan, threatening, in the most indiscreet manner, fire, sword, and fury to the perpetrators.

D'Isigny started at once, and in eight days was looking at the scene of the disaster—looking at the

pretty château, where he had been born and bred; now a noble mass of smoke-grimed ruin. They had trampled and torn about the garden, but he found a rose tree which his mother had planted, with one frostbitten bud upon it. That was all he found of his property which he could carry away, and so he took that.

He rode across at once to his sister's at Dinort. The Convent of St. Catherine's, which was perched on high, looking down upon the swift tideway of the Rance, was strangely quiet under the winter sun, which was paling in the west. It is all gone now, with much else; but in those times it was a high-roofed château-like building, which had been added at a later time to the *ogival* chapel, which had formed part of the original building. The chapel was at the other side of the building to that which he approached, and all was perfectly silent, barred, dead. He knocked, and there was no response.

There had been no violence here as yet. At this time of year there were of course no flowers, yet the parterres were all in order, and a few Christmas roses were beginning to push up through the mould.

He shouted once, twice, and at the third time he thought he heard an echo, and a very singular one. He thought he was dazed.

For it was an echo of music, very feeble and very faint; almost wiry in tone, yet perfect in tune—a chant.

“Bah!” he said. “It is the nuns in the chapel at vespers. Poor souls, are they undefended?”

He went round under the chapel windows, and heard the thin chant go on. It was feeble, yet singularly plaintive and beautiful. But it was not its plaintive beauty which touched him, so much as its unutterable helplessness. He had seen his own house in wreck and ruin, and he began to appreciate the awful tornado which was upon them; and here he found eight or nine lonely, unprotected old women, retreated to their chapel, trying feebly, yet with good faith, to whistle away the wind. So he put it at first.

Yet it was more solemn and more awful amidst the surrounding silence, than the most furious thunder-rattle. D’Isigny’s horse, which he was leading, shook himself and rattled his bridle.

“*Cochon!*” hissed D’Isigny; and shading his

eyes with his hand, stood there listening to the shrill well-sung chant, until it was ended.

There was a side door into the chapel opposite where he stood; and when all was silent he beat upon it, somewhat loud, to attract the attention of the nuns. It was answered in a singular way. The nuns inside, at once, with emphasis, struck up—if I dare use such a vulgarism about such a glorious piece of music,—

“*Stabat Mater Dolorosa*,”

with an emphasis and precision which sent the blood tingling into D’Isigny’s ears, and made his eyes hot with emotion. He tried the handle of the door before him, and, lo! it opened, and he passed suddenly into the dim chapel, leaving his horse outside.

He never thought of crossing himself, the sight was too strange and wonderful, yet I fear too common in those days. Nine nuns, too feeble, too friendless, or too brave to fly, had ensconced themselves in the dim little Gothic chapel, to wait for death. They had determined that they would die singing, like the Scotch Covenanters, and the hymn

they had chosen was the Stabat Mater; so when D'Isigny had beaten the door they had begun it. They were all kneeling together when he passed in and reverently advanced towards them; and, seeing only him, they ceased.

"My sisters," he said, "forgive me. I am D'Isigny, the brother of your Superior. Is my sister here?"

A withered old nun rose from her knees, and came towards him calmly.

"Your sister is gone, monsieur," she said, very quietly.

"Do not tell me that my sister has deserted her post, madame—I mean mother. Do not tell me that," said D'Isigny, passionately.

"She has only left this post to take one of greater danger," replied the sister.

"Thank God!" said D'Isigny. "Thank God for that."

For men's hearts and heads were hot in those times, and he had just been looking on the beginning of the great ruin, on the blackened ruin of his own house.

"Yes," said the nun, "our sister has gone to her

real post, and I am left to teach these few sheep how to die, as brides of Christ should die."

"And where is my sister?" said D'Isigny.

"By now," said the nun, "she is preparing herself, by a short probation, for the vision of God. The blessed Saint Catherine, whose servant she was, pleads for her, and her time in purgatory will be short; not to be shortened by our masses, for our turn comes to-morrow."

"Explain, madame. Is she dead?"

"The attack of the Revolutionists—for whose forgiveness we pray fasting—on La Garaye," said the nun, "was to take place this afternoon at vesper time. It is over by now. She put it to us, as lady visitor of that hospital, whether her post was not there, as we are not to be attacked till to-morrow. We, weeping, bade her go."

"She was a D'Isigny!" shouted he, waving his hand wildly over his head; and then recovering himself, "Ladies, let me urge you, save yourselves; I have no hospitality to offer you, for my château is in ruins, or by heaven," he added ferociously, "it should have been ill for those who violated it. Disperse yourselves among your friends."

“We have no friends,” said the nun. “The young ladies our pupils, and those who had friends, we ordered away under their vows of obedience. We are quite friendless and quite contented.”

D’Isigny ran out of the chapel, uttering a furious oath, and leaping on his horse dashed straight away through the *bocage* towards La Garaye.

“Why, this is madder work,” he said, as he rode, “than Marat and Desmoulins. Is France gone mad? Where will it end?”

We can answer him now, after the fact. France had gone mad. Where will it end? That question is still unanswered.

The country is very thick between St. Catherine’s and La Garaye. The peasants had attacked the smaller game, but as yet had not got either the dexterity or the arms with which to attack the larger. Many a buck went stotting off before him in his wild ride; many a wild boar rushed snorting away; he broke into the chestnut avenue very near the hospital, and paused to listen. Everything was perfectly quiet, save that he could hear an idiot, who laughed at certain intervals a long loud laugh, which ended in a whine.

"It is all quiet as yet," he said, "they will make a night attack." Still he rode cautiously round the end of the avenue into the garden. The usual sounds were going on in the house, but only one man was to be seen. André Desilles, tall, calm, and erect, standing outside the porch.

"Great heavens!" said D'Isigny, as he rode up, "what are you doing here?"

"Keeping guard," said André. "Your sister is inside, keeping the *crétins* quiet. We expect them every moment. Do you know that your château is burnt?"

"Yes, Marat told me, when I went to see him in bed last week."

"Marat! Are *you* gone to the left?"

"Not I. I shall be extreme right soon. This will not do."

"It will certainly not do," said André Desilles.

"It will not do in the least degree," said D'Isigny; and here the conversation came to an end.

But not for long; André Desilles spoke next.

"M. D'Isigny, we are both, I very much fear,

near death. I have had very good reason to fear that I have in some way offended you. Father Martin has more than hinted as much to me. Would you tell me what I have done? for at this moment one can say that I love and respect you deeply, and that my offence must have been utterly an unconscious one."

"Bah, what matters it now, then?" said D'Isigny. "Well, I thought that you truckled too much to the new ideas; and I thought, moreover" (for D'Isigny always put the truth last, although he always did put it), "that you had not made up your mind between my two daughters. I know better now. I found you where you should be, at your post. If you have done wrong you are forgiven; if you have done right I apologise; let there be an end of it. What measures have you taken here?"

"None whatever. There are none to take. We shall probably die like rats in a hole."

"H'm," said D'Isigny. "This is very pleasant. How is my sister behaving?"

"Splendidly. Let us go in and see her. Have you quite forgiven me?"

"I have forgotten what I had to forgive; I always loved you in my heart. Let us come in."

"And see the last of it," he might have added, for the end was very near. They went in to the hospital, and *saw* the last of it.

In a large mullion-windowed room, looking on the flower-garden, were the *imbéciles* and the *aveugles*, standing, sitting, walking about, some spinning cats' cradles, or knitting, some playing with toys, some merely moping; the blind sitting mostly silent, in dumb expectation; for although the situation had been very carefully kept from them, they knew that something was going wrong. Among them all moved the five brave sisters whom we have seen before, and in the centre of all sat calmly poor Mademoiselle D'Isigny of Dinort, a woman not considered wise even among her friends, but now calm, brave, dignified, and grand. D'Isigny, with a proud flash in his eyes, went up to her and kissed her, saying—

"My brave sister! after so long do we meet like this!"

She held her arms lovingly round his neck, while

her delicate fingers played with his hair. "My loved one, my brother——"

André Desilles walked once more to the door. D'Isigny soon joined him in a very softened and saddened mood. "André, I *cannot* urge her to fly; I cannot. Would you have me do so?"

"I cannot say. I am really not capable of giving a decision, but I think you would only disturb her mind, for I am sure she would not go. I have something to say to you."

"Say on, for the time is short."

"Do you know that Mathilde is to be married, subject to your consent, to Sir Lionel Somers?"

"I have just gained the intelligence. I thank God that in these times the noblest and best of my children should have a shelter. Though I dread, I very much dread, that there is something of pique in it. They have mutually changed their minds so very suddenly I cannot altogether understand it. Still a marriage between two such entirely amiable people *must* be happy."

"They kept their secret well," said André; "I was two months at Sheepsden without discovering it."

"You at Sheepsden!"

"Yes, I. I went over to see if I could gain her, and thought that I had done so until I was un-
-leceived, rudely and suddenly."

"Did Mathilde deceive you, my poor André?—
surely not."

"No! no! I only deceived myself."

"I am deeply sorry for this," said D'Isigny.

"I am sure you are; but it is not a time to speak
of such things. Do you know the news from St.
Malo?"

"No, I avoided the town."

"The Revolutionists hold it, but the 18th Bre-
tagne regiment, perfectly loyal, hold St. Servan."

"Can we not communicate with them?"

"I have sent messenger after messenger, but I
fear they have no means of crossing the Rance,
with the Revolutionary band which destroyed your
château between them and us. At all events it is
too late now, for here are the Revolutionists."

Here they were, evidently a very dangerous and
earnest set of men. They had approached in
perfect silence, but with the swift jerky tread of the
French peasant when barefooted or lightly shod,

which is now idealised into the march of the Zouaves. With one figure in advance they poured rapidly round the corner of the avenue, in a confused, yet compact mass, and the foremost man was face to face with D'Isigny before the latter had fully appreciated André Desilles' last words. Then they halted.

Who can *describe* a mob? Dickens himself has to be very general when he does so. D'Isigny saw before and below him (for he stood on a step) a quiet crowd of silent men, which he calculated to be between three and four hundred strong. The colouring of the crowd was a dull olive brown, with here and there a patch of brighter red and blue. He did not notice what arms they carried, for every face in the crowd was turned on him where he stood.

And ah, such faces; most of them finely shaped—for the French have a large *average* of beauty—but ruined, hungry, quietly exasperated, yet deeply determined. If they had howled and yelled it would have been better; if they had borne him down furiously it would have been better; but there they stood, calm, desperate, in perfect order, with

their wild wolfish eyes fixed on him alone, waiting while their chief parleyed with D'Isigny. Verily the wolf had come to the door. He was known to most of them, and known as a just and honest man. They waited for him to speak. A young man in one of the front ranks burst out into a hollow barking cough, which he could not restrain: those round him *sacréd* him, and silenced him.

"My friends," said D'Isigny, with great dignity and calmness, "listen to me."

They were listening to him. The laugh of the idiot inside was painfully audible in the silence.

"I need not ask you what you are going to do. God help me, and forgive you! I stood just now before the blackened ruins of my own home—of the home where my mother nursed me, and my sister, given to God and God's works all her life, played with me and prayed with me fifty years ago. I utter no curse, I invoke no vengeance. Our order may have sinned against yours; but these poor sheep here, what have they done? They are your own flesh and blood; the idiots and the blind of your order. Surely you may spare *them*. Let me plead with you, if you be human."

"I am not," said the spokesman, a very handsome soldierly looking young man. "You have made us devils."

"Let me plead with you one moment. There are none here but two unarmed, a few charitable women, and some unfortunates whom Judas himself would spare. I pray you, by the God who made us, turn from this most wicked expedition, and send your wrongs and your rage elsewhere."

"D'Isigny and Desilles are friends of the people," cried a voice in the crowd, with a strong Breton accent, and there was a distinct murmur.

"Hog! be silent!" shouted the spokesman. "D'Isigny," he continued, "we are not provincials, with the exception of certain grovelling pigs, whom may the devil confound! We are one of the general bands, and we know nothing of you. You said you were unarmed. You lie! you have your sword. Give it up, and stand aside! This house was built by an aristocrat, and must burn!* Stand aside!"

D'Isigny quietly and quickly joined André Desilles in the doorway. "Give me room, André,

* I can conceive no other possible reason for the most wicked and wanton destruction of La Garaye. Yet there stand the ruins.

and good-bye," said he, and André, like a good soldier, obeyed orders; D'Isigny stood alone in the doorway.

The infatuated young man, without giving any order to his followers, dashed up at him, armed with a heavy cutlass. There was a sudden graceful, rapid movement on the part of D'Isigny, as he drew his sword, and something flickered before his hand like a brilliant spark of lightning. There were just one or two clicks heard, as D'Isigny parried in *carte*, and then went under his adversary's guard in *tierce*; the next instant the young leader's head fell heavily on the pavement at D'Isigny's feet, and the leaderless Revolutionists saw D'Isigny wiping his sword in a cambric handkerchief, with the dead body of their champion before them.

His triumph was only momentary. They swarmed on him like wolves. How long it was before he was beaten down, disarmed, and bound, who can say?—not long. He was never insensible in the frightful ruin and havoc which followed, but he was stunned and dazed. He saw a hundred things which it took a great effort of memory to remember:

André Desilles, fighting furiously, until crowded and disarmed ; his sister, standing among the other sisters, with some of the blind round them, singing, as it seemed to him, odd verses of all kinds of incongruous hymns, as was very likely to be the case with that poor lady ; again, his sister, with her wimple torn off, and her poor, close-cropped head nearly bald, being pushed along, bound, out of the door, and of a furious fight around her among the Revolutionists themselves ; a tall, quiet sister, with whom no one meddled ; a fierce, bare-headed little sister, who fought bare-headed, and scolded and was laughed at, exhibiting the Old Adam most unmistakeably ; idiots who laughed and cheered wildly ; idiots who shrank into corners and under benches ; idiots who did nothing, and who thought nothing, but were swayed about among the crowd, with a sickened feeling of submission, like logs on a storm-tossed sea. Blind people who, after each rude push, felt about with trembling fingers in their eternal darkness ; blind people who shrank terrified into themselves, and with bowed heads and arms crossed on their breasts, waited for the end ; blind people who, in their darkness, feebly wailed out

the name of this sister or that, to come and help them.

Three or four men had stayed by D'Isigny all the time, guarding him; and what is more, taking care of him. Once or twice there had been furious demonstrations against him from knots of three or four, but these men who stayed by him always said, "He is a friend of the people, and must be tried." On which they had been cursed for provincials. These men now told him it was time to move.

"Where are we going then?" said D'Isigny.

"Out of the way of the fire," said one of them.

So he followed them out of the door, and lo! it was dark, and quiet moonlight; and when they had taken him a little way, he was told to sit down, and he found that he was beside his sister and André Desilles, and that two of the sisters were tending on his sister, and two on André Desilles. The fifth, and more furious little sister was still *emportée*, scolding and raving, but they never heeded her. La Garaye, in the moonlight, was before them.

But as La Garaye never was before. Blotting

the moon, rose three great columns of smoke, already red at their lower edges.

"The rat-hole burns," said one of the Revolutionists who guarded them. D'Isigny, with his usual tact and discretion, turned on him at once.

"Of all the foul and dog-like deeds done since France was France, this is the most foul and abominable, aimless, stupid, foolish, cruel, wicked beyond all telling. You have ruined your cause to-day. And do you think that God will not plague France for this? Ask in fifty years hence," here he raised his hand, and the Revolutionist who was nearest to him knelt down suddenly, saying aloud: "He will break his cords, this furious aristocrat;" but adding, in a whisper, in D'Isigny's ear: "For God's sake, monsieur, keep silent. You are among friends, who have risked their lives for you and yours more than once to-day."

La Garaye blazed aloft, fell, and smouldered into the ruin we see it now. The idiots and the blind, in their mental and physical blindness, went wandering off, in a night for both of them more hideous than is the darkest for us—whither? God knows.

To waysides, to beg; to alleys in the forest, and to lonely rocks on the shore, to die.

If this happened in kindly, gentle Brittany, what must it have been in Auvergne and Dauphiny?

So our party sat in the winter's moonlight, until La Garaye was burnt, and the scolding sister had scolded herself into quiescence. Then they began to compare notes. André was not badly hurt, only bruised; and Madame D'Isigny, the lady-visitor, passed from loudly desiring martyrdom (which she had been very nearly getting) through a general statement of her woes, until she came to her rheumatism. She had behaved nobly and splendidly the last two days; had made an effort such as very few women, or men either, are capable of. But the danger seemed over, and her rheumatism had been very dear to her for many years, and so she solaced her honest soul with it. And as the few Revolutionists who were guarding them kept them sitting there, on the ground, in a smartish frost, the Lady Superior's rheumatism did really promise to be one of the finest rheumatisms ever seen, likely to cover her with honour and glory for the rest of her life.

D'Isigny once or twice asked why they were kept

there. The answer was now—" *Taisez, monsieur !* " Madame of St. Catherine's gathered from this that the Revolutionists had gone towards Dinort ; and mingled regrets and anticipations about her rheumatism, with regrets that she had not been permitted to die among her own nuns. Hark ! What was that ? Musketry.

CHAPTER XII.

EXPLANATIONS.

THREE or four well-delivered volleys followed by silence. Their guards left them and departed into the forest.

“It does not matter much,” said D’Isigny, “how we are murdered; but I feel a kind of growing curiosity about this new disturbance. What, my dear André, has been the effect of the day’s proceedings on *you*, as a matter of curiosity, for instance? How has this burning of La Garaye affected *your* opinions?”

“I have broken with the Revolution, and when I am free I shall instantly rejoin my regiment at Nancy, and do my duty there.”

“The sack of La Garaye has done so much for you, hey?” said D’Isigny. “Well, it has done much the same for me. It matters little—our time

is short. What do you make of that last fusillade then ? ”

“ There is no doubt that the loyal regiment from St. Servan has crossed the river, and has met with the insurgents. Which have won I do not know, but here comes our party. It is the regiment, by heaven ! I congratulate you sincerely.”

Directly afterwards Louis de Valognes was beside them.

“ Here they are,” he shouted, “ safe and sound. Bring torches, that we may see them ; bring knives that we may cut their cords. Great heaven ! what happiness. Come quickly, wooden feet.”

“ Do not haste,” said a loud, fierce, strident voice, which they all knew, and at which Madame the Lady Superior betook herself to her prayers. “ Pray, do not haste, messieurs. Let me see these fools, tied head and heels like rabbits : think that had it not been for me you would not have been here at all, and let me look at them.”

“ My dear madame, consider,” said Louis de Valognes. “ Pray think, my dear madame——”

“ Out of the way, sparrow ! ” said Madame D’Isigny ; “ let me look. Ah, *ciel* ! there sits on

the cold grass the great and dignified D'Isigny himself, bound like a sheep. But he looks grand, this husband of mine! but he looks noble!—oh, yes! So you have been tampering with the Revolution, my dear? Ah! and how do you like it now? Not very well? And how is your Mira-beau, my dear? Bah! untie the man; he is too pitiable a sight—untie him. And my sweet sister of Dinort, and her singing nuns”—here the Lady Superior turned her face and trembled—“are they all murdered? No; the wicked old woman of Dinan has saved them by showing manhood and generalship. You may sing again until next fortnight—until the *revanche* comes for what I have done to-night: then your nuns must go. The men who could have stamped out the fire—D'Isigny, De Valognes, and Desilles—have let it spread, and it will burn you, my dear, in time. I, a poor weak woman, have stayed it for a time, but not for long.”

The Lady Superior began, “My prayers, sister, are at your service——”

“*Your* prayers!” said Madame D'Isigny, with a snort of the most unutterable contempt, and a theological opinion which I cannot reproduce.

“*Your prayers!* Here, messieurs, untie this other one: this man of oil. *Man*, did I say? This creature of every Christian virtue, this André Desilles, who has just allowed that English booby, Sir Lionel Somers, to carry off my daughter from under his nose, and has neither shot him nor run him through. Unbind the man who has given up my daughter Mathilde without one blow, and let us see if he can stand upright, or if he crawls on all fours.”

“Madame! madame! for the sake of the forgiveness of heaven!” interposed Louis de Valognes.

“You mean that I require the forgiveness of heaven for coupling the name of André with hers? —You are right; but I doubt if I shall have it. Mathilde!” continued Madame D’Isigny, now white with fury, “Mathilde and he! Ah, heavens, go. She who is worth us all put together ten times over; she to think of *him*! Ah! well, that also is ridiculous once more. I do not wonder. Sir Lionel is the best, after all.”

She had scolded herself into—not quiescence—but simply exhaustion, and André Desilles’ voice came in very calmly and quietly.

“Madame has been talking extreme nonsense, and most mischievous nonsense. Is it possible to make madame understand that she is making of herself a spectacle extremely humiliating.”

Madame immediately gathered herself together for departure.

“My dears,” she said, quietly, “if I stayed longer I might get *emportée* and angry. At present I have been perfectly calm, and have said things which will rankle in your hearts, and come to you when you wake on your beds for some time. At present I have the best of it; and as I do not intend to have the worst of it, I will make my *congé*.” And so she departed, firing a parting shot at her husband, who had had nothing to produce against her but a very dignified attitude. “*You tampering with the Revolution! It would take a man to do that!*”

So she was gone, and they looked after her as she sped away, gaunt under the moonlight, through the soldiers, away towards the forest. When she was out of sight they began to talk again. D’Isigny, feeling a certain loss of dignity, drew himself up and began to bully at once.

“Well, my good son-in-law,” he said to De Valognes, “and so I find that we have to thank you, of all men, for this disgraceful business. The country is well served, *par Dieu!* Here is my son-in-law, in command of his regiment, who I may say looks on and allows his father-in-law’s château to be burnt, and as if that was not enough, stays in garrison while one of the most beautiful and useful charitable institutions in the country is utterly ruined and sacked by a horde of miscreants of whose existence he must have been perfectly aware.”

“Monsieur, mon père——” began Louis.

“What matters it. You have a fine story to tell, no doubt. For me, I look only to results; and what do I see? My château burnt, and the hospital sacked and destroyed. *N’importe.*”

“Mais, mon père——” said Louis.

“Mais, mon fils,” said D’Isigny, “this is scarcely the time for telling a lame story. Some other time when we meet again; when France is once more tranquil, for instance, we will hear this little story of yours, and laugh over it. For the present, I must see to my sister and her rheuma-

tism. My sister, come with me to your convent. I will protect you, and we will tell those poor nuns of yours that even if their throats are cut, they will be avenged three or four hours after by M. Louis de Valognes."

So he departed, leading his sister, and having succeeded, by mere groundless assertion, in putting every one else apparently in the wrong. He had practised this trick so often that it was no wonder he was perfectly *au fait* with it. He went off towards Dinort, affectionately leading the Lady Superior through the forest by rough and rude bye-paths well known to him from boyhood. The poor old lady had a sad time of it; for although he was most gentle and affectionate, he was so ostentatiously careful of her, that she would almost as soon have been alone. Her shoes kept coming off in the clay, and D'Isigny put them on again: her wimple was torn by briars, he rearranged it. Nothing could be more tender; yet she was afraid of him, as she always had been; she loved him, as she always had done; she revered him beyond most men. But he had neglected her for very long, and his ostentatious kindness on this occasion over-

powered her. She was glad when she got safely to her dear old convent, was welcomed by her nuns, and found herself in her old simple parlour. She was somebody *here*, at all events, though she might only have a week's lease of the place.

The nuns welcomed her "with effusion." I wonder if the habit of self-assertive bullying is catching, and goes by example? This gentle old lady, if she had found her way home entirely alone, would have thrown herself into the arms of these nuns, and they would all have bewept and behowled themselves together. But arriving under the escort of D'Isigny, Madame stood on her dignity, and put them aside.

"My daughters," she said, "save your tears until there is occasion. Unless your hearts were stubborn, you would be singing hymns of joy for the deliverance which my brother has wrought for us." (A pure fiction, but one in which she believed the moment she had spoken the words.) "Be humble, my daughters, and make our deliverer welcome. He and I have borne the burden and heat of the day: see to him. As for me, I will go to my room and pray. Has Father Martin been?"

Father Martin had not been.

“I suppose they have murdered him. Sister Priscilla, come with me to my room. Good-night, brother; the sisters will see to you. I am utterly spent. Good-night.”

Sister Priscilla, who followed the Lady Superior to her room, was surprised and alarmed at a very singular fact, one she had never seen before. Madame the Superior was cross, nay, almost fractious. Sister Priscilla, good soul, generally the most *difficile* sister of the lot, was in a condition of loving sentimentalism at welcoming back the dearly beloved mother; but the dearly beloved mother was decidedly cross, for the first time in her history. Even when sister Priscilla had got the mother's legs on the fender before a good fire, and had given her some hot wine-and-water, the mother was not quite herself. The patient and good sister Priscilla looked on her so tenderly and persistently, that the good mother gave way at last, and called herself a wicked old fool; on which sister Priscilla dissolved herself into tears, and the two foolish women fell into one another's arms without explanation.

It has been noticed often by those who knew

M. D'Isigny best that, although he was possessed of every Christian virtue, the effect of his society upon the temper was always unfortunate.

Meanwhile there were left on the lawn before the still smoking ruin of La Garaye, Louis de Valognes and André Desilles. When the brother and sister had departed, they looked at one another, and fairly burst out laughing.

"How cleverly he turned the tables on us, and went off with flying colours," said Louis.

"He couldn't turn the tables on his own wife, though," said André Desilles. "But then who could? What is the history of *this*? How did *she* come here?"

"The regiment of Morbihan was beaten out of St. Malo yesterday by the Revolutionists, fairly beaten from street to street, and were forced to retreat to us at the Tour Solidor. We knew of the revolutionary bands over here, but we had no means of crossing the Rance, and were utterly puzzled. This mad old woman, this mother-in-law of mine, was not at fault though. She got a sufficient number of loyal fishermen to drop down their boats on the tide and take us across; and what is

more, came herself, and saw that all things were done in order. We left the Morbihan regiment in garrison, and came on. That is all."

"Where is Adèle?"

"In the Tour Solidor, quite safe."

"How does she stand all this?"

"Very badly. She is in a delicate situation, and has utterly lost nerve. What is this between you and Mathilde?"

"Nothing."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHEEPSDEN LETTER-BAG.

It was night, and Mathilde was alone, when Mrs. Bone came in to her by the fire, holding three letters in a corner of her apron, between her finger and thumb. "Letters, miss," she said, "from France." Whereupon Mathilde fell upon her, and kissed her, after the manner of her nation. The three letters flew far and wide in the struggle, and the first one which Mathilde got hold of was from her father.

M. D'ISIGNY TO HIS DAUGHTER MATHILDE.

"MY CHILD,—

A fortnight ago I received a letter from Sir Lionel Somers—much delayed in the transmission—which I am bound to say gave me the deepest grief and pain.

“ I thought that there was one single soul left in this false and hollow world in which I could trust. I actually, at my time of life, believed that there was one being whom I loved, who was not entirely false and treacherous to me. How I have been deceived, Sir Lionel’s letter has shown me.

“ I am myself utterly at a loss to conceive in what manner I have so entirely forfeited your confidence and your duty. I am unaware in what way I have failed in my duty to you as a parent. That I am an imperfect character I am aware, and I may not have done my duty to you ; I may have erred in my affection for you, by hesitating to point out with sufficient emphasis and persistency the faults which I saw in you. Let all that be granted. But how much better would it have been had you calmly pointed out these shortcomings of mine, instead of treating me with what I am forced to call treachery and deceit.

“ I had designed you for nobler things. I believed, as I told you last year, that you could be trusted as few women could. I then asked you, were you prepared to act with me in any complication which might occur ? Your answer was ‘ Yes ;

that you could die mute.' Your conduct says 'No;' and I have done with you.

"Done with you; that is to say as a trusted friend and an obedient daughter, I can trust no longer now. I can only command; and when the time comes I *shall* command, and you will obey. For you, with the traditions of our family, to have taken up with the discarded and deceived lover, and, without consultation with me, to have engaged yourself to him, is a dereliction of duty and propriety so utterly monstrous that I confess my inability to deal with it in anything like a reasonable temper. I can go no further with the subject at present.

"At the same time I call your attention to one fact. In case you are required here, to look after your sister, I shall demand and command your attendance. I have no more to say.

"D'ISIGNY."

Three days before he had quietly told André Desilles that the marriage was a good and conveyable one; but there are men who will bully their women as long as their women will let them; and

so D'Isigny revenged the fearful bullying he had got from his own wife on poor Mathilde.

It maddened her. She believed every word of his foolish ill-temper, and abased herself utterly. Her horror at his silly, cruel letter was so great that she could not weep,—only walk to and fro, moaning, believing herself to be the most worthless, false, and ungrateful being under the sun. Mrs. Bone and William heard her walking up and down, talking to herself, and forbore to go in as usual. “Mademoiselle has heard bad news,” they said. Indeed, she had.

“He cannot trust me? Ah, heavens! he might, if he knew all. Would I not give up Lionel and life for him or for Adèle. Ah, so cruel, papa, yet so just and so true. Ah! he cannot love as I can; yet, what matters? The angels in Heaven do not love—only contemplate. And I was the last in whom he could trust, and I have deceived him. That is very true; and I am so wicked. I was the very last in whom he trusted, and I have deceived and betrayed him. Why did he leave me alone, without his guidance, here? Because he trusted me. And I am never to have his confidence again?

Is there no way? Yes; he speaks now—as he spoke before—of a trust he had for me to fulfil. Let him put me to the test, and I will fulfil it. He asked me, ‘ Could I die mute ? ’ Yes, by the holy crucifix ! Yes, by the holy presence——”

She paused, as if shot. Her great Protestant lover stood before her, looking down on her, and on her raving with a disturbed and puzzled face. For one instant, and for one instant only, she felt ashamed that he should have seen her in her passion and her despair. Another moment she had wound herself around him, and was crying, “ Lionel ! Lionel ! I have no one left me in the world but you. Kill me before you cast me off, dear. I will die mute, as my father asks. But kill me before you leave me ; for I have none left but you.”

English gentlemen, in those days, had, if all stories be true, a remarkable faculty of making themselves agreeable to women,—a sort of love-making instinct, in fact, more or less dangerous, which they seem to have lost in the march of civilisation. Sir Lionel, though not a man of the world, seems to have had some dim idea as to what was the

best thing to do under the circumstances ; for he quietly drew her to a chair, and said only, " Come, and tell me all about it, dearest." It was not much ; but the little was well done. There was a quiet, cool strength about this young man, which had a wonderful effect in quieting Mathilde. He took the letter from her, and read it, keeping his arm round her waist. When he had done he said—

" Have you pledged yourself to go to France, if he demands it ? "

" Yes, Lionel. You will not leave me all alone ? "

" I will never leave you, my beloved. "

" Thank God ! for I have no one left but you now. "

" There you are mistaken, my little one, " said Sir Lionel ; " you do not understand your father as I do. This letter is mere temper. He evidently approves of our engagement. Be quiet now : if you are forced to go to France by any bargain with him, I will go with you, and will never leave your side. I tell you, point blank, that there is great danger in going to France just now. Your mother is behaving with the greatest indiscretion on the Royalist side ; and Jenkinson believes that there will be a

Jacquerie which will throw the old Jacquerie into the shade. Yet, if you have to fulfil your bargain with your father and go, I will go with you. Now, to pleasanter matters : is this the only letter you have got ?”

“Nay,” said Mathilde, cheerfully ; “there were two others. Mrs. Bone brought them in on the corner of her apron ; and I, in kissing her, dispersed them somewhere. There they are.”

Sir Lionel picked them up and brought them to her. The first she read was more pleasant than her father’s letter ; it made her smile and laugh with honest happiness.

“DEAREST DAUGHTER,—

“The blessing of our Lord, of the Virgin, and of all saints be upon you ! until we both, after our necessary trial and purification, meet face to face in Heaven.

“I thank the Lord always for you. In your rising up and in your sitting down ; in your going and your coming, I praise God for you. I praise God because he has let me, in these later times, behold a Christian. Christianity, my daughter,

means an utter abnegation of self; and I have seen that in you. I, therefore, praise God for you always.

“They say that you are to marry this Sir Lionel Somers. I am content; for he is noble, good, and Christian. I could have wished him a Catholic; but one cannot have everything. He will hold your faith sacred; be careful to hold his equally sacred. I am no believer in proselytes, now-a-days. He has had time to form his opinions. I think them erroneous; but if they are disturbed, you will have dangerously to disturb much else with them. My daughter, always remember that the duty of a Christian is edification—the *building up* of faith of any kind, not the *destruction* of it. Our own Voltaire, of whom, as a Frenchman, I should be proud, has pulled the edifice about our ears. *Enfin*. But he puts nothing in its place. My dear, the destruction of the Christian religion was as well done eighteen hundred years ago, by the Scribes and Pharisees, as it has ever been done since, even by Voltaire. The petty and miserable formulas which these destructives give you in the place of our grand Christian morality, developed through so

many centuries, are as vague as the wandering waves of the Dead Sea, and are as bitter and as dusty as the apples of Sodom in the mouth. Have I not tried them myself then? Was I not nearly prosecuted for heresy by Cardinal Leroy?

“I say this to you because you are about to marry a Protestant, and because your father, in whom you trust among all men, is blown about with every wind of doctrine; going in here, going in there, until he has lost the respect of his best friends. I would sooner see you a Protestant than see you such as your father is.

“Keep, my daughter, to the Catholic faith, in which you were born. Let no man delude you into the idea that you can ‘change your faith.’ Such a thing is utterly impossible. A change of faith presupposes an examination of arguments. No faith will stand such an examination. Stay by our old Catholic formulas; they may not be absolutely perfect, but they are well enough.

“One word more. I speak these words in the face of *death*. Do not come here. We French are beginning a total *bouleversement* of all things. I cannot say where it will end. Your old friend Marat

is in retirement; but his demand for three hundred thousand heads will be answered, unless I am mistaken. We secular priests will have to pay, in our lives, for the wickedness of such regular priests as De Rohan and Leroy. *Do not come here.*

“God bless you! As I said before, I thank the Lord always for you. I shall have no grave, or I would ask you to come and weep over it. Still, we shall meet again before the night. The night is very dark, and grows darker hour by hour; but Christ is risen, and has become the first-fruits of those that slept.

“MARTIN P.”

“So they do not all hate me and despise me, you see, Lionel,” she said. “There are some who think me worthy and good.”

“Do not I? Does not every one?”

“Well, my father does not; and that just now is a very bitter thing. I wish you had not seen that letter of his.”

“If I had not seen it, I could not have comforted you.”

“I could have eaten my heart out in quiet,” said

Mathilde. "I want to gain your respect, and how can I ever gain it if he writes me such letters as that, and if I let you read them?"

"Do you think they would make any difference to me, knowing your worth as I do?"

"*You* think not; but I do not know. Your respect for me may survive this attack on my sincerity, made by my own father; but it would not survive many such attacks. You are in love with me just now, and all that I do is beautiful in your eyes. The time will come when the mere sentimental love which you have for me now, must develop into something nobler and higher—into respect, confidence, and perfect trust: so that we two may go hand in hand towards the grave together, without one single cloud between us. How then will it be, Lionel, when our honeymoon is over, when my beauty is gone, when I am grey and cross, and old and unattractive; and you and I are left all alone together in this weary world, waiting for death? Will you not say then, 'I cannot trust this old woman; her own father, a just man, accused her of treachery and of deceit?' The bitter words which you have read to-day will come rankling up

in your heart then, and we shall go to our graves side by side, but not hand in hand. Ah! but it is cruel of him."

Sir Lionel was very quiet with her. It was some time before he spoke, for the simple reason that he thought over what he was about to say before he said it; and when he spoke it was to the purpose.

"Mathilde, I do not wish to speak hardly of a father to his daughter, unless it were absolutely necessary. But it *is* necessary that I should tell you that I have a growing contempt for your father, and that selfish attacks, from him on you, like this one, only bind me to your side more closely."

"So you think now, Lionel; but if he attacks me thus, you will get in time to believe in his accusations, and they will undermine your respect for me. You think not; but a woman knows, when a man thinks. Instinct! Ah! yes, then, instinct. Your dog knows to which bush the wounded bird has crept, and leads you to it, when you yourself would tread upon it without seeing it."

Sir Lionel's reply to this was that of a lover, silly and foolish beyond measure. A kiss, and a few

affectionate sentimental platitudes; earnest enough and sincere enough, but utterly out of place with *her*. The woman was in earnest, the woman's heart was on fire; she had been bitterly wronged by her father, the man in whom she trusted beyond all other men. She had tried—clumsily enough, perhaps—to state her case to Sir Lionel and make him understand it, and he ended by answering her by a mere common-place, sentimental love passage: put his arm round her waist, and by doing so showed her, once for all, that he was incapable of understanding her.

She acquiesced in his embrace with a sigh, which he did not understand either. Yet she felt that there was some one left who loved her; and in weariness laid her head upon his shoulder, and looked up into his face.

The next letter was from Adèle:—

“*St. Servan.*”

“I SUPPOSE that you thought I was dead. I am, however, not dead; though nearly *ennuyée* to death. I think you might have written to me. I do not ask either for commiseration or for sympathy; I

only ask for a sister's love. I do not doubt that I have it, only I wish it would express itself more often. However, I utter no complaints, further than remarking that the total desertion of me by my own family seems to be utterly heartless and cruel. I say no more. I can bear my own burden.

"I suppose that you will reply, that you did not know where to write to me, and also that I had never written to you. I should conceive such a line of conduct on your part to be highly probable. I am not at all clever, and am but a poor judge of motives and actions, but I should not be at all surprised if you took that line."

"Sheepsden was triste enough, but this country is utterly unbearable. We are besieged and threatened always by an atrocious Jacquerie. Louis is but very little with me. He is as kind and good as ever; there never was anyone kinder or better. It may interest you to know that the Marquis was very ill last night, and that I shall soon be the Marquise de Valognes. It may interest you to know that. That I as Marquise de Valognes will ever be as great a lady as you will be as plain *Lady Somers*, I very much doubt. My dear"

(this expression was erased), "they are burning the châteaux, the wretches! They have burnt our father's, and have burnt mamma out. They have destroyed La Garaye, and, therefore, what will they do with *my* châteaux?"

"My dear" (not erased this time, she was getting over her petulance), "I must speak to some one, and I have no one to speak to but you. I am leading the life of a corporal's wife, in an atmosphere of drums, and, for the last few days, musketry. The day before yesterday, part of the regiment in which my husband holds commission as Captain, was beaten from St. Malo. Here I am in the Tour Solidor, without a soul in life to speak to. Lady S—— is here, and Lord C——: with their stupid insular coarseness they seem to enjoy the escapade. But, as Marquise de Valognes, I am forced to show them the difference in our ranks; and they laugh much, these English: what is more, again, they laugh at me. *I* heard them. Aha! my Lady S——, you laugh then. This is well enough in times of *émeute*, when one herds with anyone. Wait, my Baroness, till I meet you in Parisian society, with all the prestige of my great rank,—I

will say nothing of my beauty. No, my dear lady, I am not so tall or so fat as you; but I have my attractions. Wait then, my lady, until we meet in the old Parisian society. She is Orleanist, this woman! She is Palais Royal, this woman! Let us wait until we meet at Versailles; when the King has stamped the Jacquerie out under his feet."

Wait, indeed, my poor Adèle; and if you will forgive a vulgarism, wait a very long while.

"I have enraged myself about this woman, and have wandered. It matters not, my dearest old Mathilde; I tell you that she is unbearable, and that Lord C—— is a pig. I will say not one other word about either of them. Lady S—— is Catholic, and Lord C—— is Protestant; yet they both court favour with the people by fussing about among the wounded. They were welcome. But when Lady S——, after laughing at me, finds that I am in the way to become the mother of a Marquis; then that she should suddenly change her tone, and become pitifully affectionate to *me*; then—but I *will speak of these people no more, not one word.*

“I heard Lord C—— say, ‘She is a terrible little fool;’ and Lady S—— said, ‘She seems so. Lionel Somers will do better with the elder sister.’ For my part, my dear Mathilde, I am sure I hope he *may*. You have qualities which I am sure will grace the fireside of Ashurst, when dear Lady Somers is in Heaven; but I have a growing conviction that it would never have done for me.”

Mathilde had a precisely similar conviction. And it is remarkable that the Rector, the Rector’s wife, Mrs. Bone, William the Silent, Lady Somers, the Dissenting Preacher, and even Martin the Poacher, all held this same fact, put above by Adèle herself, as an article of faith. They said, in different ways: “Mathilde is the one for him. When she is Lady Somers there will be good times in the Valley.”

“And Father Martin sides with these people—that is so exceedingly bitter. If there was one person more than another whom I thought I could have trusted, I thought it was Father Martin. He sides with these English. I must seal up here, *Louis* tells me, for the mail is going.”

She had stopped here ; but had gone on again a few days later :—

“ *Montauban.*

“ MY VERY SWEET, OLD, DEAR SISTER,—

I have not heart to read over the first part of my letter, for I am sure that I was cross and *difficile*. I am at times, as you well know, dearest ; though now I have not you and Mrs. Bone to vent my poor little temper on—(Ah ! Mathilde, it is a very little one)—and I was shut up in that horrid Tour Solidor, and I was very cross and very frightened. Here ! Ah me ! I must sit down and tell you everything.

“ Of course I was late for the mail : I always *am* late, you know ; so I can add to my letter. And the most astonishing and beautiful things have happened which one has ever heard of.

“ My lord and master, Louis, came in to me, that night when I was so cross, and when I wrote I do not know what of crossness which you may read above ; and he announced to me that we were Marquis and Marchioness, and that there were eight châteaux and forests, and the hotel in Paris, and many other things. He did not mention

the châteaux and the other things, but I have reckoned them all up on my fingers often enough.

“I received the notice of my new dignity but badly. Mathilde, I *do* try to be a good wife to him, and never to be cross to him or give him pain; but you know the state I am in, and I could not help it. I fainted, and I fear very much that I made him a scene on recovering from my faintness. When I came quite to myself and looked up off his shoulder into his dear face, I saw that he was in a very tender and pathetic mood. I struggled up to kiss him, but he anticipated me; and turning from me, he said to some one who stood by, ‘It is utterly impossible that she can go to Paris.’

“And Father Martin’s voice said, ‘It seems totally impossible. What do you think, Madame?’

“I shuddered and clutched Louis tight in my arms, for a very quiet voice—do I rave, then? do I babble? I know what I mean—a *grey* voice, grey, cruel, sharp, keen as the weather from the keen north-east, said,—

“‘It is impossible. It would be murder to take her there. She must go to Montauban.’

“I was looking at the grey arched stone vault

over my head, for we were in the lower room of the Tour Solidor, and as I heard the voice the grey arches all reeled, rolled, and became a dim mass of grey as I fainted again ; for the voice which I had heard was the voice of our mother.

“ That foolish Sister Veronica, who says she knows everything about something, says that I can’t be too careful about the impressions I receive. Heavens and earth !—what may not happen ?—and a marquisate !

“ She was gone when I came to myself a second time ; there were only Father Martin and Louis. Louis said, ‘ My love, the country is very disturbed, and I cannot, under present circumstances, take you to Paris. We have many châteaux, but the only one which is safe over our heads is Montauban, to the south in Brittany. My uncle seems to have known that, for he has made it his treasure-house. Will you go there ? ’

“ I said I would go anywhere with him.

“ ‘ But I mean without me,’ he answered. ‘ I am a peer of France now, and must take my place. A D’Isigny would scarcely persuade a De Valognes to desert his post at this time ? ’

“ What could I say, dear Mathilde, I do love him so : I never loved him so dearly as I did then ; he becomes more and more a necessity to me day by day. Yet I am not all a fool : I am not all frivolous. Ah ! I could die for him, or for you, old sister. I was ill : I felt almost as though he was deserting me ; yet I knew his truth, and I said, as a D’Isigny should,—‘ Go, dearest ; but come back as soon as you can.’ I did well, I think ; did I not ?

“ And he is gone, and I am here at Montauban. I can write little more now. Father Martin brought me here, and stays with me. He is very charming, this Father Martin : he shows one little things which one never saw before. There are no leaves now, and no insects, yet he can show one the swelling bud of the horse-chestnut, and asks me,—‘ Can I believe that this tar-smeared bud will ever develop into the glorious frond of the full-blown tree ? ’ and I say Yes, I have seen it do so ; and he says in reply that I could not take my oath of the fact. And he brings me chrysalises, and laughs at me when I tell him that they will turn to butterflies ; in fact, amuses me much by his paradoxes. The *post* is really going out this time. *Enfin*, it is

paradise, and my mother has been to see me. I will tell you all about everything in my next letter. Kiss for me, yourself, Lionel, Mrs. Bone, and also the Rector, if you can reach so high, you little! —I will tell you all in my next letter.”

With due deference to the “Memoires,” we shall take the liberty of doing that ourselves, having only extracted this last letter from the Valognes’ memoirs to illustrate our story, to show the Marquise de Valognes as the affectionate, petulant little creature which she most undoubtedly was. She was vocal on all occasions; Mathilde was also vocal on most occasions, but silent, or nearly silent, on emergencies.

CHAPTER XIV.

MONTAUBAN.

Poor little Adèle had had a very hard time of it. The Revolutionists had done their revolutionary business in St. Malo in a very disagreeable manner. They had suddenly attacked part of the regiment in which Louis was captain, had crowded it in the narrow streets, had fraternised with some of it, and taken the arms out of the hands of another moiety. There had been nearly half a day of scuffling and crowding from street to street, a great deal of squabbling and speechifying, and a little fighting—a very little fighting. Opposite the north cathedral door the mob had let off their fire-arms, and in doing so had severely wounded the maire, a man of their own party, who was at that moment negotiating with the Bishop of Coutances, who appeared on the side of the troops ; whereupon the

regiment "let fly," as De Foe says, and killed their own man, the Bishop of Coutances, stone dead.

After this wonderful passage of arms there was a parley. It was ultimately agreed that no one was bound to agree on any subject under the sun; that any person who should express any decided opinion on any subject should be considered as no good patriot, and "hors de la loi." The assassination of tyrants was pronounced to be not only legal, but admirable; the domination of Christian priests was resolved to be abominable; anyone who said anything against the new doctrine "that every man unattainted of crime, of the age of twenty-one years, should be allowed to think and do exactly as he liked," was declared to be an enemy of the State. These and other vague resolutions were passed very quickly. But the concluding resolution was by no means vague, and I think was the only one which reduced itself to action. It was, "that the Régiment de Morbihan, and the company of the Régiment de Dauphiny, commanded by Captain de Valognes, immediately leave this town of St. Malo;" which that regiment immediately did,

saying to itself, "Heh bien, donc!" and also, "Mais c'est incroyable."

There was a great deal of noise over these first passages of the French Revolution, but there was little bloodshed. Both parties were afraid of each other. Neither had got warmed to their work. In their fear, both parties saw that the quarrel was a deadly and a desperate one, and so both parties were afraid. The democracy of France did not as yet know its strength. The wolf and the dog had quarrelled, and the wolf was perfectly ready to kill the dog; but, then, the *master*—the man with the whip? *He* out of the way, it would take three dogs to kill a hungry wolf. However, there was the master with the gun and the whip, and so the regiment of Morbihan was let to march over to St. Servan peaceably.

Adèle, however, was deeply annoyed by the misfortune of the Morbihan regiment, and thought most decidedly that the main part of their own regiment should have crossed in small boats, under fire, into the narrow streets of St. Malo. She thought but little of the officers of her husband's regiment; nevertheless, they knew perfectly well

what they were about. The operation would have been a very difficult one, even if conducted by the *gardes du corps* itself, with all its loyalty, even when disguised in liquor. With a regiment like that of Dauphiny, unpaid, consequently sober, and with no Swiss regiment near, the thing was absolutely impossible. To keep quiet, and to get their men to stay by them until they were paid, was as much as they dared hope for. It is doubtful if even they would have moved on the Revolutionists at La Garaye, had it not been for the influence which a frantic woman always has on men in times of excitement; the frantic woman in this instance being Madame D'Isigny.

Adèle was utterly out of humour with everything. Louis was exceedingly poor, and she really was leading a life little better than that of a sergeant's wife. She had, since her break with Sir Lionel Somers, taken it into her head to hate the English, call them Orleanists, Palais Royalists—all kinds of names—and gave herself ultra-Royalist airs. It so happened that Lord C——, and his sister, Lady S——, having French connections, had come over here on business, and, as we have seen, put her in

the exceedingly bad fit of temper during which she had written the first part of her letter to Mathilde.

Louis had come to her with the news of their splendid succession. She was utterly dazed and stunned by it. The Marquis was not really expected to die. What Adèle said about his dangerous illness she hardly believed in; he had been so ten times before: she only said it in self-assertion against Lady S——. He was a hale old man of sixty, who had had illnesses, of indigestion mainly, and had sometimes been crapulous for days and days after an insular drinking bout with some of his English friends; but that he should die suddenly no one ever dreamt. It was no “insular” brandy drinking which killed him; it was that he overdid himself with too much consideration. Cardinal Leroy, prince of the Holy Roman Church, who was found gasping on his bed the next morning, and praying for wine, said that when he left the Marquis the night before, the Marquis was as sober as himself. Valets might laugh, but the noblesse did not. The Marquis de Valognes had over-excited himself about the state of public *affairs*.

Adèle had not at first taken in the full magnificence of her new station. She at once began to give herself airs with Lady S—— and Lord C——, and to write to Mathilde a more or less true account of her astonishing good fortune; but she kept her ill temper on. It might suit her to be good-tempered and amiable, but that required consideration. No one better than herself knew the enormous social advantage of getting a name for having a difficult temper. She was not inclined to forego that advantage just at present.

It is so very difficult to decide between two ladies, when they both give an entirely contradictory account of the same fact. We have heard Adèle's account of the matter, which seems entirely probable; but then, just look at Lady S——, from her diary: "Feb. 18" (1790, of course). "Our silly little new-made Marquise," says *her* diary, "more absurd than ever. Yesterday when her husband brought her news of her astounding good fortune, and told her of the awful death of this wicked old Marquis, whom she had never seen; having no grievance left, she was determined to make a new one; she burst into tears, and walked

up and down the caserne, lamenting that her dear old uncle had died without her having been there to smooth his pillow." When ladies disagree on facts, we had better not try to decide between them.

One thing, however, seems to be perfectly certain: that when she had fully realised her splendid inheritance, her temper returned; and she behaved most reasonably and most well. Her devotion to the Marquis (whom we will continue to call Louis de Valognes) was excessive; yet she very nobly, under the circumstances (I do not speak ironically), made no opposition to his going to Paris, and consented to go to Montauban with Father Martin. She cried very bitterly on parting with Louis, but said, "You will not be long, my love; not long." She may have been perverse and foolish, but she was very loveable.

Here, for the sake of telling the story properly, I must call your attention to the parting words between Louis and Father Martin.

"I would sooner she went to Paris with me out of mischief," said Louis. "But it is impossible."

"More the pity, it is impossible," said Father *Martin*.

“Do not let her get into trouble,” said Louis.

“I will not, if I can help it. Is she to admit her mother?”

“How can we stop it?” said Louis.

“I know not how. I wish your wife was further from her mother-in-law.”

“But you,” said Louis, “can manage Madame D’Isigny. I have heard you say things to her absolutely terrible.”

“And with what result?” asked Father Martin. “What is one’s purpose in pouring water on a duck’s back? As to *me*, she will listen, but act her own way after all; as regards Adèle, Madame D’Isigny will not even so much as listen. She will play Adèle as a card, mark you. I thank God that Mathilde is safe married in England.”

“Not married yet,” said Louis.

Adèle had not seen the Revolution as yet. She hated it, as a child hates the pagans, the Roman emperors, inbred sin, or the Jesuits,—from hearsay. She knew but little of their purposes, and less as to how they were to be carried out. In her

journey to Montauban her knowledge and her hatred were considerably increased.

She was a tolerably good hand at bullying or coaxing, or both, every one whom she met, to let her do exactly as she pleased; and she very soon managed the gentle and tender-hearted Father Martin. He tried hard to prevent her from taking the old Château D'Isigny on their way south to Montauban. He told her that it would shock her; that it was merely a mass of charred ruins; but for some reason she was determined to see it, and prevailed. As usual, Father Martin was right, the effects of the sight upon her were almost disastrous.

They alighted from their coach at the ruined gateway, and walked arm-in-arm through the winding but now neglected shrubberies; Father Martin silent and anxious, and she rallying him and prattling on about their rebuilding it with their money as a surprise to her father, when the king should have stamped out this embroglio. She remembered every step of the way. Here was the place where André and Louis had hidden in black masks, made—do you understand?—of an old

tablier noir of Madame, their aunt of Dinort (which was droll again, if you thought of it), and had rushed on her and Mathilde as brigands, and made Mathilde cry—the foolish Mathilde. Here again, in this very spot they had played, those four, the story of Job! and André Desilles had been the devil, going up and down the earth growling; and he had played so well that he had frightened Mathilde, and she had run away, “for she has no personal courage, that foolish old Mathilde; and here is the end of the wall by the flower-garden, and we shall see the dear old place again—and—ah, great Lord! you should not have brought me here. You should not have shown me this, you cruel man. I shall die! Mathilde! Mathilde!—à moi! à moi! —Mathilde! Mathilde!”

She had buried her pretty eyes in Father Martin's cassock, and had clutched his strong arm with her tiny fingers, for they had come suddenly on the old home of her childhood, and she had seen the ruin, and had appreciated it in one instant, in her keen, narrow little brain. Only one stark blackened gable rising from among the scorched trees; and that solitary flame-eaten gable pierced

by one half-ruined window—the window of their old nursery, where, years ago, she had prattled, played, and quarrelled with poor old lame Mathilde. She had looked on the Revolution at last.

She lay moaning on Father Martin's cassock. A wolf, disturbed from among the ruins, with arched tail, raised lips, and grinning fangs, fled past them to his lair in the forest; but this she did not see. Father Martin got her away, and by the time they reached the carriage she was quite silent, and sat silent beside him for the rest of the journey—quite silent. Father Martin got thinking somehow of a pretty, charming little kitten he had had once, while studying in the ecclesiastical seminary at Coutances—the nicest little kitten in the world; how the bishop's forester, bringing home a present of quail to his room had brought his dog, which had hunted his kitten into a corner. Why did he think of that expression of utter terror and unutterable hate, which he saw in the face of his dear little kitten just now, with the lovely and loveable little Marquise de Valognes beside him in the carriage? Who shall say?

The glories of Montauban were veiled in night as

they approached it. He handed Adèle, the Marquise, out of the carriage ; and as he took her up the steps, cast a look right and left at the splendid façade of the almost unequalled building. There was little to be seen except a broken, apparently interminable mass of peaked towers, with blinking stars behind them ; there was little to be heard, except the howl of a wolf, far away in the broad forest, with which the seigneur had fenced this home of unutterable selfishness and sin.

Nothing had been changed, for the old Marquis was buried but yesterday. The house was lit and warmed, and everything was prepared for them. The hall, a very noble one of marble, was filled with liveried servants, mostly young men, mostly (one may say with *ex post facto* wisdom) of the *Henriot* type. Silent, obedient, watching. Father Martin shuddered as he looked, and said to himself : “ *Here is the Revolution ;*” and, for my part, I do not think that the good Father was far wrong.

The person who *ex officio* received Adèle was a very quietly-dressed, lady-like woman, in grey silk, with a few, very few, rather handsome jewels, but who, in mark of her being a menial, wore a cap ;

which Father Martin recognised as the cap of Coutances ; but, as he remarked, worn with a difference. There was a bit of lace about it somewhere, or there was something which a stupid male eye could not detect ; but although it was of the same shape as the cap which the Coutances girls wore (and with which, meaning no scandal, Father Martin, when a student, was tolerably familiar), yet it was a very jaunty cap. And the woman again ? Father Martin was now an old man, and his ghostly duties had carried him into some very queer places ; and whenever he thought of the very queerest places to which he had been called to perform the last offices of his religion, he always thought of a certain square-faced, middle-aged woman, in a cap smarter than anyone else's, however dirty she might be. And here was this same woman, in silk and diamonds now, receiving Adèle with *empressement*, and preparing to conduct Madame la Marquise to her apartment. Was it the *same* woman, or was there a race of them ?

If Father Martin had known his Hogarth he would have seen his friend looking out of window on the right-hand side of the street in the " March

to Finchley," not to mention elsewhere. Curiously enough, Shakspeare, who got nearly everything, never got her. Poor, foolish, nonsensical old Quickly and she are miles apart. Defoe got her as "Mother Midnight;" as did also Hogarth. Dickens *once*, and only once, in the "Uncommercial Traveller." The least said about her the soonest mended. Nothing on earth is gained by the contemplation of unmeasurable wickedness. Defoe tried, holding up the character in its native wickedness (that is the formula, I believe), and did less than no good at all; merely disgusting the good, who did not want disgusting, and telling the wicked a great deal more than they knew before. I would not have touched on the subject unless I had been in good and pure company. I would have avoided the subject if I could.

Father Martin saw this woman advance to greet Adèle, with a calm stare in her wicked old eyes—a *connoisseur* stare—which made him clench his teeth and clench his hands. He saw his own Adèle, his own little silly ewe lamb, innocent, foolish, loveable, careless, go toiling up the great marble staircase with this woman holding the light for her, and

staring down on her as she lighted her. Did he swear?—there are many kinds of swearing; he resolved, which is more to the purpose. He resolved that this wicked household should be broken up the next day. “I have full powers to act from Louis,” he thought. “But will they go? I wonder what I had better do?” He had assistance the next day, from a quarter whence he neither desired nor expected assistance.

He was utterly lost in thought, until turning round he found himself face to face with a foolish-looking old major-domo, who seemed as though it would be a cruelty to expect him to be sober, and ridiculous to suppose that he ever had sufficient strength of character to get drunk. The young Mamelukes in embroidered liveries still stood round, and among them Father Martin looked on the face of this half-tipsy old fool as on the face of a friend. The Mamelukes stared at Father Martin, in their way respectfully, as at something they had not seen lately. They had seen many queer things, and expected doubtless to see many more; but the spectacle of a secular priest at Montauban was almost *too much* for even their highly finished manners.

“ Monseigneur L'Évêque ” (the major-domo thought he would be on the safe side, though he knew that Father Martin was only a priest) “ will be desiring his supper. It is prepared.”

“ My supper,” said Father Martin, recovering himself. “ Certainly. Send these young men to bed. You can serve me.”

That was impossible. Monsieur the Marquis had given orders that his eminence was to have every attention paid him. There was a supper of nine *plats* ready for Monsieur. •

“ Put them on all together then, and send these fellows to bed. Wait on me yourself. I want to talk to you. I shall stay here until the supper is on the table. Then come you and serve me ; and mind that you are sober.”

The major-domo was about as sober, or about as drunk as ever he was, when, having put on the supper, he sent the Mamelukes to bed, he stood behind Father Martin's chair, ready to serve him ; but Father Martin, leaning his elbows on the table, left some priceless dish untasted while he thought, “ Can I get this kindly-looking tipsy old fellow to talk confidentially with me ? I'll try him

with sentiment ;” and this determination of Father Martin led to a little incident, possibly illustrative of those times.

“ My friend,” he said, rising from his untasted supper, and confronting him, “ I fear this has been a very wicked house ? ”

The major-domo nodded.

“ A *very* wicked house ? ”

He nodded again, more strongly.

“ There are rooms,” he said, “ which will do very well without airing at the present ; of these rooms I hold the keys, which will most probably be better in the custody of Monseigneur the Father Confessor, until the return of Monsieur the Marquis. I will yield them to-night. Monsieur the Marquis is very innocent ; he should not have sent Madame here without preparation. Madame is fresh and innocent as the rose.”

“ My friend,” said Martin, “ I think you are an honest man. I like your face, and I wish to trust you. Had you ever a sister ? ”

“ I had once,” said the major-domo, retreating from him, and growing pale. “ But I have none now ? ”

“Do you remember her when she was young, innocent, gentle?”

“I remember her well. A light-footed, bright, beautiful, angel of a girl, who sang always till the birds in the wood sang in emulation: gentle, innocent, amiable, with a laugh for the rich, and a heart for the poor. Lucille was the pride and the darling of our town: why do you torture me? Is she not gone?”

“I do not wish to torture you,” said Father Martin, gently. “I wish to call forth your better and older nature. But I ask you to remember your lost sister as she was, and to think of our poor little Marquise in her place. Would you have had your sister lighted to *her* bedroom by the horrible, hideous, wicked-looking woman who has just done so——”

He was as nearly frightened as ever he was by the effect of his speech. The major-domo, deadlly pale, advanced towards him again, pointing one finger at him, and said, with a rapid, hoarse, guttural articulation—horrid to hear—“You are no priest—you are a fiend out of hell. That hideous hag who has just lighted up the pretty bride, is my

sister, the tender, gentle, little sister, in answer to whom the birds sang. He, the late Marquis, who now"—(I will spare my readers)—"*He* made her what she is. Is it a wonder that I made myself what *I* am, and tried to forget it?"

So the major-domo departed like a hot Breton as he was, leaving Father Martin's appetite for the supper of nine *plats*, by no means improved. He had thoroughly roused the old Adam in this Breton's heart now, for he was in most furious rebellion; he only appeared once again that night. He appeared suddenly at the door of the dining-room, and said, "If Monsieur requires nothing more brought, I will retire. There are the keys of which I spoke to Monsieur." He then laid them on the table and departed.

Father Martin took the keys and wandered over the house. Above, on the higher stories, the footmen were wrangling and laughing alternately. The open rooms he left for daylight; but the few, in a very distant wing, which he found locked, he opened with his keys, and examined. Verily here *was* the Revolution.

CHAPTER XV.

MEDEA.

IF it could be stayed, even only at the threshing-floor of Araunah! Prayer had done great things in the history of the world; but could prayer change the counsels of the All-wise and All-mighty. He was bound to believe so: he believed that he believed so: and yet this evening his faith had left him utterly; and all that his prayers came to that long and dreadful night, was a wild *ad misericordiam* cry to God not utterly to desert him in the darkness. Father Martin was not the first who cried "Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabachthani" in gloom of a dark wild evening, rapidly closing into the mirk of an unnatural midnight, which gave promise of no dawn.

He was a man who hated to excite himself and get into an *ecstatic* state over his religion. No man

in this world was a more uncompromising Roman Catholic than he. No man could fight the battle of the doctrines of his church better than he. Yet no one was more furiously opposed to ecstatic religion. In the lull which came before the end, he took occasion to illustrate this point by an example to Adèle, who required it.

“The night we came to Montauban,” he said, “I wrestled all night in prayer; and towards morning I cast myself on my bed, and had a dream, which can perfectly well be accounted for by the state of my brain. Had I been a fool I should have called it a vision. I prayed directly and indirectly, to the saints and to the throne (I do not use his words, but an intelligent reader can supply them), until at last I lay on my bed with the crucifix beside me. Then I thought of all which happened on Calvary, and prayed for the intercession of St. Veronica; and at that moment I believe that I feel asleep. The last thing which I saw with my waking eyes, was the crucifix beside me; in another moment, St. Veronica, with her handkerchief, was beside me; and she was beautiful to look upon.

“I would have looked after him who was toiling up the hill, but she would not let me, but held the handkerchief in her hand with the divine head upon it, and bade me look. And I looked and adored. But while I adored and wept, the head changed into Latin writing, slowly, letter by letter, beginning from the thorn on the extreme left of the crown, and ending to the extreme right of the mouth. I repeated the words as they appeared; what were they? The words of the Lord’s Prayer—only that; and when the dream ended and I awoke, I was saying, loudly, ‘In Secula Seculorum.’ For ever and everlasting, Adèle. Not for a Revolution; not for a period of time; not for all time; but ‘in secula seculorum,’ ‘for ever and ever’ God’s Almighty glory, and his eternal justice is to rule the great creation. I heard the voices of the wicked Mamelukes* laughing overhead; and I said

* Expression antedated most probably. Martin could not have known so much about them as the French did a year or so later; it may as well stand. It is *extremely* difficult to put a good story together which in any way touches on the past, without making *wilful* errors. Of course, in the present state of historical knowledge, no novelist of decent repute would dream of writing a tale of the past without being very particular on the score of dates, costumes, and so on. Pedantry in such a matter as this, however,

the old prayer again, and found it the best of all. I slept like a child."

They were very fierce in their faith, just now, these priests. So, unluckily for them, were men of the Marat and Carrier school. Who is going to win after eighty years? we have not seen as yet; and with the Emperor on the tight rope between 120,000,000 of catholics, "sans compter le petit Mortara," and the Revolution, it would be wise to withhold one's opinion for a few weeks.

Father Martin slept soundly after a time, and when he awoke he became aware that there was a woman sitting by his bedside, with her foot in a silver stirrup, netting fishermen's nets. He was not very much surprised; the Revolution was on them, and nobody was likely to be surprised any more. Still he went as far as to say, Ho, Madame!

"Taisez donc," said Madame D'Isigny the Ter-

very often injures a good story. What would that splendid story, "Kenilworth," have been had not Sir Walter Scott, with a glorious audacity, outrageously violated all chronology. He makes Amy Robsart appear at the revels at Kenilworth eleven years after the painful and notorious inquest on her dead body at Abingdon (*vide* Pettigrew's Pamphlet). He makes Leicester nod to Shakspeare, and ask him if he has written any more plays? Shakspeare then being twelve years old.

rible. "I have come to the end of a row, and I must calculate. I drop here forty stitches in the whole length, or is it forty-five? I wish you would wake like another, and not so suddenly."

Father Martin got quietly off the bed and confronted Madame D'Isigny.

"Madame," he said, "will excuse my extreme dishabille. I was tortured with doubts last night about many things, and I did not take off my clothes. Will you give me *congé* to retire and put my dress in order?"

"If I had wanted to see you in fine clothes I should hardly have invaded your bedroom," said Madame D'Isigny. Lie down again. I wish to talk to you."

Father Martin looked for his latched shoes, put them on, and then sat on the edge of the bed, smoothing his chin, staring straight at Madame D'Isigny, and absolutely silent.

"Which of us is going to speak first?" said Madame D'Isigny.

Certainly not Father Martin. He sat absolutely silent, at the edge of the bed, stroking his chin, and looking fixedly at Madame.

"I suppose I must speak first, then?" said the terrible Madame, after a time.

As there seemed to be no ghost of a doubt about this matter, she spoke.

"This is a very beautiful house here!"

Dead silence from Father Martin. Nothing but the cool, quiet stare. Madame dropped her eyes and went on with her netting.

"It will make a nice house for the young couple, and I shall be near my daughter in the times which are coming. It has all happened very well."

Not a single word from Father Martin's side: he merely sat on the edge of the bed and looked at her. She, on her part, netted faster and faster.

Did he know his woman? He knew his woman. She had put on her sweetest temper and her most charming manners, in order to entrap him, HIM, into a pleasant conversation. He, on the other hand, desired particularly to exasperate her, and to cause her to make a fool of herself; so he sat on the edge of the bed and looked at her.

She netted faster and faster, and tugged harder at her stirrup.

"You wish to exasperate me," she said, growing

white with anger. "You wish to exasperate me by keeping silence. You shall not succeed. No!" she went on, rising, rolling up her netting, and casting it to the other end of the room; "you shall not succeed in exasperating me, on your old priestly trick of silence. Speak, and speak to the purpose."

Father Martin, taking up one leg and nursing his foot, spoke at last. He said,—

"I was waiting for Madame to speak to the purpose. When she does, I will answer."

Madame spoke to the purpose—

"I only wanted your help, and you as priest; or, what is the same thing, as time-server; or, what is again the same thing, as coward; or, what is once more one and the same thing *coquin et misérable*; sit on the edge of your bed, stroking your wicked old shoe, and driving me to madness. You calculated by your silence to drive me into incoherent fury. You have succeeded—but no, my dear, you have not succeeded in your plan. Look, then. I am coherent enough. I want your help. I am quite calm, see you. But this is not, with its present household, quite the place for my tender and innocent Adèle. You must help me to get rid

of this household, my dear Father. You must go with me in this."

Father Martin said that Madame now spoke to the purpose, and that he would be most delighted to do so.

"I am calm and sensible, then," she went on. "That netting which I threw; I saw a rat against the door, and I threw it at the rat. They catch rats in nets, do they not? Was it not clever in me to throw the net at the rat?"

Father Martin, I fear very much directed by the devil, said that Madame's courage was only equalled by her dexterity.

"And they catch rats like that now, do they not?" continued Madame D'Isigny.

I regret to say that Father Martin's answer, while he contemplatively stroked his shoe and was thinking of far other things, was,—

"Certainly Madame; all the world catches rats in that way now. And the rats caught so, are far superior to those which are reared as standards, even to those planted against north walls."

"You can be like another, you priest," was Madame's sudden and short commentary on Father

Martin's wool-gathering. "I could make you say what I chose."

Father Martin, who had been undoubtedly wool-gathering, felt horribly guilty. He had guessed at her next move, and was thinking how to checkmate it, when he made this horrible fiasco about the rats.

"I am not aware, Madame, that I have said anything foolish while speaking of pears."

"*Grand imbécile!* we are speaking of rats; and all the time I watched you, and you were trying to checkmate me. Pick up that netting there, which I have cast to the end of the room, and then come here; listen and obey."

Father Martin picked up the netting, and brought it to her. But she had met her master for all that. He now sat on the edge of his bed again, waiting for her to speak. She spoke.

"I said just now that these——" (I must spare my readers her language; if they want such, let them read the flowers of speech * cast by our young friend Camille Desmoulins on the path of Brissot) —— "that these footmen must be discharged to-

* "*Histoires des Brissotins.*" Imprimerie patriotique et républicaine. 1793.

morrow. I have no authority here: you have some. Dear Father Martin, are they, or is that woman, fit companions for my daughter?"

Martin agreed at once.

"I," he said at once, "will do that for Madame. I have power to do so from the Marquis. It is an extremely dangerous thing to do, for we shall make deadly enemies of these discharged servants. You are, Madame, the most furious and *emportée* woman I have ever seen in my life; and I love you for this, because you will not, at any risk, see your innocent daughter living here with this horrible *entourage*. I will have these servants dismissed for you, Madame; but under one condition."

Madame was extremely puzzled to think what that condition might be. Her curiosity so far got the better of her self-possession that she stopped her netting, and put her head on one side. Martin gave his condition.

"I will cleanse and purify this house instead of taking, as I could, d'Aèle out of it, on the simple condition that you do not, when it is silent and quiet, make it the centre of your Royalist plots. Madame, I adjure you, by the God we both adore,

not to involve Adèle. Think, Madame, that you are the mother who bore her. Reflect on her facility, her beauty, her frivolity. Remember the time of her babyhood, and for heaven's sake spare her. I know well, Madame, that you are infuriated in the cause of the Royalists: I know well, Madame, that Adèle, since she has seen the ruins of the château, is infuriated against the Revolution. But as a woman, do not implicate her; as a mother spare her. Listen to me, then, you inexorable woman. Adèle is silly and a coward, and if you play her as a card, she will ruin the game. Your face is hard and cruel, Madame. You propose to play that card. It will be to the ruin of many of us if you do. Do you require a martyrdom? Then send for Mathilde. We could trust her."

Medea was down on her knees at his feet in one moment. Her splendid, square, grey head was just opposite to father Martin's as she knelt to him. What did she say? Words. Would she sacrifice her daughters? Let Father Martin look her in the face. Her own daughters! Father Martin looked her in the face, and his answer was "Yes." She

has the face of a fanatic. *She* would die for either of them ; but then she would sacrifice either for her faith.

However she went back to Dinan that very day, explaining that she had only come for a day's visit to her daughter. And in her house in the Rue de Jesouil, she kept silence, making no sign : while Father Martin wondered when she would come back, and on what excuse.

CHAPTER XVI.

MONTAUBAN, WITH A, AS YET DISTANT, VIEW OF
NANTES.

TENNYSON, in "In Memoriam," asks, in beautiful rhyme, the question which most Nature lovers have asked themselves, and which children generally ask themselves—"Can one be sorry on a fine day?" The answer which I should be inclined to give is, that it is not very easy. I can perfectly conceive afflictions so very great that one would never be glad again at all. But, short of actual tragedy, I should say that there were few vexations, however great, which could not be to some extent mitigated by weather.

I was with a poet, and a great one, once, and we were in a boat on a cold, steel-gray river, under a cold, motionless, gray sky, with the yellow willow leaves showering upon us; and he was reading.

Suddenly he looked up, and said, "This weather is enough to kill one!"—I said "I love gray weather."—"Ah!" he replied, "if it *moves*, I love it, too." He was right; poets *are* right on such subjects: they are our masters there. The glorious, wild motion of a rushing south-westerly gale, even though you cannot see a hundred yards for the rain, excites and rouses one. The dead, dull, leaden gray sky, which one gets in an English autumn, would affect and depress that nearly lowest form of our countrymen, a betting man; not, of course, to the same extent as the gray arch of the guard-rooms at the Tour Solidor depressed that sensitive little being Adèle, but still to some extent.

If the weather, which means, after all, a change of colouring, can affect a tipsy old vagabond, what can one think of the effect wrought on Adèle by her change of colouring and circumstances? Winter, gray-ribbed stone, and the life of a corporal's wife; then, suddenly, Spring, a marquise, and Montauban. She gave way utterly and entirely under it. In spite of Louis's absence, which was her only vexation, she told Father Martin that she was

the very happiest and luckiest little woman in France, and that she meant to remain so. Let the Revolutionists keep clear of Montauban; she would—I don't know what she would not do. As for Father Martin, what heart had *he* to spoil her gaiety? Why, none at all.

For he could see, wise man, that Adèle was much *better* under these circumstances. I think I know a French friend who would say that Adèle was a being who required light. Father Martin did not put it in this way. His formula was that she was a delicately-organised and very timid little being, and the worst point in her character, a little feline ferocity, never came out until she was frightened. Great, grand Mathilde, he used to say, had neither cowardice nor ferocity; but there were some, and again there were others, children of the good God. And he was glad and pleased to see his lovely little Marquise happy, gay, religious, kind, good-tempered,—drinking in, as it were, the glorious beauty around her. “She must not be frightened,” he said; “she will be spoilt, if she is terrified.” Whereas her mother, of Dinan, said, “I could scare that little fool into anything I chose.” But she

only said this to herself; what she did is more to the purpose.

Martin knew perfectly well that there was going to be an end of all things. Many secular priests knew it; one hundred and forty-nine, for instance, at the time of the *Séance du Jeu de Paume* in the June previous. I fancy that few could have known it better than clever, secular priests, who had toiled all their lives among the lower orders in the towns, and who had to answer questions which, with Cardinal Leroy and the late Marquis de Valognes to the fore, could not be answered by any honest man. At all events, Martin believed that the end of things was come as it was: he had looked about to see where his duty lay; he had prayed for direction; and, behold, he found himself sent to Montauban to take care of this very silly little Marquise.

He readily believed that his duty lay here. Certainly, she wanted much taking care of. Honest and pure as she was, she might be the cause of a great deal of mischief—politically. And her mother, a furious Royalist, lived very close by, and had the *entrée*: and Montauban was buried in the depths of a forest. Madame might well make it a place for a

Royalist plot, should such a thing become necessary ; and Madame was a fool, and would most probably select this most suspected and lonely house as being secret. Did not half France know that it was one of the most notorious abodes of aristocratic rascaldom in the provinces—the only one for miles round in loyal old Brittany. He was evidently at his post here.

And a very pleasant one. It was a beautiful thing to see Adèle's wonder and delight at all the beauties of Montauban, her *own* Montauban. She had seen, hitherto, practically nothing but that wild, triste Sheepsden in England : this place was an absolute paradise. It really was such a place as I believe one cannot see often in France now.

It stood on a slight hill, nearly a hundred feet high, in the middle of the forest, and was approached by four avenues—not regular pleached avenues as one sees in an English park, but more correctly *alleys*, cut in the natural forest, each one of which was perfectly straight, nearly two miles in length, and of level grass. The timber in this forest was not of any great size where the underwood and covert grew thickest ; but in other places there were

splendid groups of cedars, oaks, and chestnuts of great size and antiquity, with open glades around and under them. Still, from the château the general effect was of dense, unbroken forest on all sides, with the four great grass rides approaching it. The stables and necessary offices were hidden hard by in the forest, but carefully hidden; there was no farm, no cottage, within two miles; all was careful desolation: "they made a solitude, and called it peace."

The lodges, even, were not allowed to be visible from the château; they were round the corner, and the long-drawn avenue only ended in a screen of woodland. The old Marquis used to declare that no stranger ever rode or drove round the corner into the main avenue, and caught sight of the house for the first time, without exclaiming, "*Parbleu!*" or some similar form of exclamation and admiration; and, indeed, no wonder, for it was exceedingly beautiful.

It stood a little above the level forest, all alone, as though upon an altar. Its colour was deep red, of red sandstone, and the roofs were of slate. The sky-line consisted of an infinitude of crowded French-roofed towers, dominated by the vast,

soaring, square sheet of slate, pierced with dormers, which capped the principal tower. Dark, warm, rich, lurid, beyond conception: in the distance it seemed of a heavy reddish purple; nearer, with less atmosphere between you and it, more and more of a rich red; and when you had done admiring its colour, you began to see the extreme beauty of the details. The windows were of dark stone, high and narrow, with only one mullion on each, unlike a Tudor house; and when the sun fell on these windows they flamed with glory, and a wizened child might say, "See! the château of Monseigneur burns!" and its mother would say, "Not yet."

The little hill, the Mont Auban, on which the palace, for it was little else, stood, and which was just high enough to enable the château to stand a little above the forest and to catch the sun,—this hill was scarpd on all sides into a terraced garden, so that in summer time, when you got near the castle, you noticed that, although richly coloured when seen from a distance, when you were close it looked almost dull and dingy, by reason of the flowers in which its foundations were set.

There were no glass houses, and so the effect of

it was not ruined, as is the effect of most great modern houses in England, by a ghastly inartistic half acre of glass. There was little need of glass so much south, with the warm Atlantic not so far off. There was only the forest, then scarps and terraces of flowers, then a wilderness of roses, which leapt as high as they could along the red walls, and then aloft the solemn towers and pinnacles. There were no fountains; there was no hill sufficiently near to give the requisite pressure of water. The gist of Adèle's first letter from Montauban to Louis was a particular request that he would allow her to have fountains. "I shall scarcely consider myself properly married without fountains," she said. "All the world have them now." Louis wrote back, and gave her *carte blanche* about fountains: "You have but few pleasures, my darling; would I deprive you of one?"—but she never got her fountains for all that. Circumstances occurred; for instance, her mother took to staying there, who, if I may be allowed to say so, was much more likely to assist at fireworks than at waterworks; and to the end the majestic red and purple pile continued to raise

its foundations from the blazing beds of flowers, and break the sky-line with its splendid pinnacles, without the indignity of fountains.

The forest around was the great delight of Father Martin. With the exception of the major-domo, he had dismissed all the house servants; but he had made no change among the foresters and gamekeepers. "There must be," he said, "something to attract a landlord to live amongst his tenantry, and nothing attracts him so much as sport. Louis loves it, and I will not remove this source of attraction from him without his express direction." That is the way in which Father Martin practically treated the game laws, which he often furiously denounced, when he was brought *en visage* with them. But, then, this was an exceptional case. In the first place, he found that the foresters and under-foresters were of a class utterly different from those which I have called the Mamelukes. They were, one and all of them, he could see at once, bright-eyed, swift-walking, Welsh-speaking peasants. They did not even understand the language of the Mamelukes; and on meeting Father Martin in the alleys of the

forest, dressed as they were in velveteen and gold, they knelt beside the path uncovered. These men were the people of the country—South Bretons.

In the next place, this *παράδεισος* was a real paradise to Martin. He was a man who passed through the world loving everything but sin ; and, wicked man, very often making the best of *that*. But, from his education, he had been forced to love Nature only through books ; and, lo ! here she was face to face with him, and an old man in green velvet to show her to him. Father Martin, deeply disapproving of the game laws, held over the question of the disforestation of the forest until he should have had time to consult Marquis Louis. On which the reader may moralise.

The oldest forester and Father Martin were at once sworn friends, for the forester was very religious (as, indeed, were the others), and spoke French, which the others did not. He told Martin many things. “ This Montauban,” said the Breton, “ was the only wicked house around ; it was the last wicked house southward ; but, then, it was wickeder than hell. The peasants had been true and faithful to the late Marquis, now in glory or

soon to be ; for he, the forester, had heard that he had left eighty-five thousand livres for masses, which would, no doubt, be sufficient to pull him through, for the late Marquis was a highly-instructed man, and knew the value of a livre like another, nay, better ; and his spiritual director had been the Cardinal Leroy, an eminent ecclesiastic, who would, doubtless, give him the best fiscal advice. No doubt, the Marquis was by this time in glory ; but the good Father Martin, doubtless, knew best. It was no business of his, and he begged pardon."

Martin turned to him to see if he was mocking. Not in the least.

The forester continued : "The people had been waiting sadly for the new Marquis, and had hoped that he would have come ; for they heard that, although somewhat tainted with new opinions, he was good. The Marquis not having come, they had been glad that he had sent his bride with such a good father as the one before him. The people thanked the father for getting rid at once of that abomination in the neighbourhood—those accursed Auvergnois."

“What Auvergnois ?” asked Martin.

“The household servants, mon père.”

“Do they not come from here, then ? I thought they were Breton.”

The old forester made a demonstration. He sent his three-cornered hat skimming away over the fern, he stamped rapidly with his feet, he spit, he bit his nails, he pulled his hair into wisps, and he spoke.

“These Norman priests ! I ask pardon, they know nothing. Allow me, I beseech you, to relieve my mind in private. Do not listen.”

“I must beg you not to conduct yourself like a lunatic,” said Father Martin, loftily. “They were, at all events, your fellow-servants. These are not times in which to enrage yourself unnecessarily.”

The old Breton got calm, and begged pardon profusely. “I was furious because you believed that these Auvergnois were Bretons. Do you not know, then ?”

Father Martin did not know ; so the old forester told him, which is all I have to say about the matter. It was an ugly story, like many at that time, and like many now ; and Martin hated ugly

stories—he had had too many in taking confession. He changed the subject.

“ I will talk to you again—often—in this beautiful forest, and you shall tell me what the Marquis shall do for the peasantry ; and, trust me, he shall do it, old friend, for the Marquis lives but for good. See here, we are through the forest, and there is a hill before us ; let us ascend it. ‘ Montes atque omnes loci desiderati, laudate Dominum.’ ‘ High hills and all pleasant places, praise ye the Lord.’ ”

They went up together and sat on the top of the hill among some murmuring firs, which reminded Martin of Sheepsden ; he was pleased at getting out of the close forest and looking south on an extended horizon.

“ The air comes pleasant here. How far one can see ! I see village after village, forest, and rolling hills, and then a dull yellow line, with infinity beyond it. What is that yellow line ? ”

“ La Loire, mon père.”

“ And that white mass ? those are ships, I think.”

“ That is Nantes, my father.”

“ Ah ! dear old Nantes ! I was a child at Nantes once. That was before I went to Coutances to study divinity.”

They turned, and saw the noble château, glorious with windows blazing fiery in the sunset, dominating the forest.

“ It is a splendid sight,” said the forester.

“ Too splendid,” said Martin. “ Let us look southward.” And so he turned from the flaming castle, and looked once more on the broad, yellow sands of the Loire, in the dim distance. Not for the last time.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTAUBAN, WITH NEWS OF ANDRÉ DESILLES.

THIS forest became his great pleasure; and indeed it was a very pleasant place; for here Nature, in one of her most luxurious, temperate moods, three hundred miles south of Devonshire, had been left utterly to herself. The formation was half limestone and half new red sandstone, and Father Martin, being just enough of a botanist to enjoy it, botanised immensely, and found all kinds of orchises. He backslided worse than this before he finished.

Then Adèle among the flower beds was a sight to see. Here was a thing she thought she could understand and manage, and she became a perfect little Catherine of Russia among the gardeners (Bretons), and ruled her empire of colour and scent most despotically. She made an awful mess of it,

and had much better have left the gardeners alone, for they knew their business and she did not. From being ravished with the result of their labours, she began to improve it and try to mend it in a childlike, little way. She would have blowing flowers moved into other places ; she would commit all kinds of petty tyrannies, which made the gardeners smile, while they obeyed admiring, and made Father Martin laugh at her, at which she would shake her trowel at him, and laugh again. So perfectly innocent and childish, the feeblest little body, with another still feebler life hanging on hers.

“ Why,” said Martin once, in one of his very rare outbreaks of solitary anger, “ Herod or Marat would spare her ; if that woman——” Father Martin said no more, even to himself ; he only ground his teeth.

So they spent their time in frivolities—Adèle occasionally quarrelling with Father Martin. Once she penetrated as far into the forest as the home buildings, where she found horses and mules in abundance, and what was still better, cocks and hens. Now the garden was left more to itself, and

it was the poultry which came in for her attention. She declared that Martin had known of this beautiful menage so close by in the forest, and had not told her, for his own purposes. Here were horses also—why should they not ride together? Well, it might be better not. But there were ladies' horses, which had been kept in exercise by grooms with horse-rugs. They were the horses of Mademoiselle Minette. Who was Mademoiselle Minette? Father Martin knew, else why did he blush? She had her suspicions, this little person. Who was this Mademoiselle Minette?—that was all *she* asked.

And indeed the good father at this time gave cause for suspicion. Adèle watched his behaviour. What did that man do with himself before *déjeuner*, at eleven o'clock? That was what she wanted to know; and the very moment Louis came back *would* know. Louis should ask him. Why did he always, or very often—they were the same things to Adèle—come in flushed, as if he had been running, and be vague almost to incoherency in his speech? What was this mystery, and why was it reserved from *her*? This man must be watched.

She watched him, and made a great discovery. She saw him coming very rapidly along one of the alleys one morning—along the very avenue which led to the back way; and she planted herself among shrubs, and saw him come by her. It was evident that this wicked old man had committed something. He had only one shoe, no hat, the back of his cassock was plastered with black mud, and there was a great streak of yellow clay right across his tonsure. She was determined to have an explanation of all this. This would never do. The servants would talk; the thing was disreputable. Yes; she must have an explanation.

When Father Martin appeared perfectly dressed at the breakfast-table, radiant, flushed, handsomer than ever, he carried an ornament which Adèle had not noticed as he had passed her hurriedly that morning—he had a black eye.

“My dear Adèle,” he broke out, “I have been having such fun.”

“So I should conceive, sir, by your personal appearance.”

“Yes, but you don’t know all. I have been in *the forest*.”

“As you have often been—*botanising*,” said Adèle, with killing scorn.

“Exactly. But this morning I have seen what I never hoped to see.”

“I hope you may never see it again,” said Adèle, demurely pouring out his coffee.

“I hope I shall though,” said Father Martin. “I have seen a great boar killed. There is no breach of principle in that, for I wish they were all killed together. It was absolutely glorious.”

“For you?”

“Well, not for me, because I am an ecclesiastic, and have been brought up without any physical training; but glorious to those who love it. That is a very foolish head-forester of yours though. He gave me the carbine; and that is a very foolish spiritual director of yours, for he took it. And the boar charged, and I fired, and the boar knocked me down, and the dogs went over me; yet it was glorious for all that. There is too much sugar in this coffee. I have told you of it a hundred times, and still you go on; pour that away, and give me another cup. Will you ever remember?”

She apologised and obeyed, quite quietly.

“A priest must be a fool if he cannot manage a woman,” said Father Martin to himself. But then all women are not Adèles, my good father.

Things went on pleasantly enough at Montauban with these two for some months, and then more pleasantly still, for Louis, the Marquis, came, and stayed with them for more than three weeks ; and while he was there, as was arranged, lo ! the young Marquis was born.

It was the oddest baby, the most mournful and melancholy baby ever seen. It submitted with a miserable face to the mistake of having been born, but never protested even by a cry ; it gave itself up to a sad melancholy after the first hour. I knew the baby personally (as far as a man in my position may know a Marquis), some fifty years afterwards at Dieppe, when it was younger and slightly more cheerful. At this later time, the time of good Louis Philippe, it was very particular about its little clothes, and used to walk up and down the esplanade, smiling at the sea. It had a tiny little château above the Faubourg de la Barr, with a garden mostly full of poppies, of all varieties of colour. It now lives at Montauban, and is diligent

about silk. It grew four pounds and a half the year before last, at a ruinous price, but it thinks that with a change of dynasty it might make it pay. In its political convictions this baby is Legitimist. In its religious views it is Ultramontane: and the last time it was known to weep was at the signature of the September Convention. Perhaps it has laughed since. But every one who ever met it loved it, for it goes about doing good.

No wonder it was a melancholy baby, for over its cradle sat its father, telling nought but disaster, and mourning, and woe. Everything was going utterly wrong, the people really getting more embroiled and more infuriated day by day, in spite of the king's reconciliation; the present lull being only, as any one might see, temporary. Mirabeau might save us, and would if he could, but bah! Mirabeau was marked for death; and after him ruin. Such were the vague, mournful politics which were talked over the baby's cradle; while Adèle, utterly careless about the whole matter, sat casting beaming looks of love from baby to father and from father to baby.

What did *she* care?—she had those two.

Father Martin was a more intelligent listener.

Louis had left the army, and was busying himself about politics. He expressed himself glad that he had given up his commission in the Régiment du Dauphin,* because the regiment was behaving very badly, and he had quite enough on his hands without making lying promises to men about their pay, which never came for all their lying. This led him to speak of the dearest friend he had in the world—André Desilles.

I will, if you please, tell in my own way, the substance of what Louis told Father Martin concerning this singular young officer.

André, always melancholy, was as a man who had given up hope, and waited for death. He looked old and worn, said Louis, and was more silent and

* The word "Dauphiné" was written down before too hurriedly. The Régiment de Dauphiné was placed by me at St. Malo, where I believe it never was. It was diligently misconducting itself at Nismes about the time. (Dampmartin, p. 280.) "Les soldats du Régiment de Dauphiné tenoient depuis peu de jours, de contraindre leurs officiers à se retirer." It is almost impossible to be correct in a romance; Scott was not. It should have been, Régiment du Dauphin, I think. I know that I was right once, but not having had the honour of being Quarter-Master General of the French army in 1790, I am no more certain of the fact than the Quarter-Master himself.

solemn than ever. Louis had taken him to Alexandre Lameth's—had forced him to go there. There had been Bailly, D'Isigny, Barbaroux the beautiful, Lafayette—a pleasant party, airing every kind of opinion. André, who could talk so well, said nothing here, beyond quietly traversing and rendering nearly ridiculous each argument. At the very last, when discussion was ended, he said :

“ And what does your master say to all this ? ”

“ The King ? ” said Bailly, gently.

“ No, M. le Maire—Mirabeau,” said André, and politely took his departure with Louis.

“ Louis,” he said, as he walked homeward through the streets, “ I have been making a fool of myself.”

“ You certainly should not have said what you did say about Mirabeau to M. Bailly. You have made both Lameth and D'Isigny angry.

“ Bless them all with their cackle, I was not referring to them,” was the very disrespectful reply.

“ My dear André——”

“ Well then, I beg pardon. I said I had made a fool of myself, and I have made a very great one. I have made a fool of myself about a woman.”

Said Louis: "Is it a *tendresse* then, or a *liaison*?"

"*Liaison*!" said André. "Are you mad?"

"I ask pardon," said Louis. "My tongue went too fast. I forgot that you were not as others."

"It did indeed," said André. "I am speaking of Mathilde."

Louis was perfectly silent, which was the best thing he could be.

"I always loved her," continued André, "but I believe I could have forgotten her, at least to some extent, had I not gone to England. Do you remember La Garaye, and that you asked me was there anything between me and her? What did I answer?"

"You said, 'Nothing.'"

"I lied, Louis; I lied horribly. I love her as only a Frenchman can love. She has taken my soul, but I have not hers in exchange. She has taken my soul, and has given it to that accursed Englishman."

The gentle Louis said: "Be calm, my André. See, you will break the arm of your Louis."

"I ask your pardon for hurting you, Louis. I will be calmer; but look at the situation. It was bad that I should love her, it was bad that she should take my soul from me and return nothing; it was worse that she should marry this Englishman as a matter of *convenance*. All this I could have borne. But that she should take my soul and transfer it to this dolt is the thing that is unbearable—for she loves him."

"She loved *me* once," said Louis, very quietly.

"I could have borne it with *you*," said André.
 "I could have borne it well with you, for you have always been half of my own soul. But he!—that Englishman!—that he should be her husband! Is it not maddening then?"

"But perhaps," said Louis, "they will never be married."

"They may be man and wife now," said André.
 "D'Isigny will probably give his consent; and as he told me yesterday, with his cursed thin smile, they have probably married without it. It is all over by now, and there is no need to say any more."

"Then there is nothing to be done," said Louis, heartily ashamed of himself.

“One can die, and there are plenty of opportunities,” said André. “Once more am I away from my regiment, to hear earlier news from England. You remember my scolding you at St. Malo for neglecting yours. Good. Well, I go back to my regiment to-morrow for the last time.”

“I forget where the Régiment du Roi is just now,” said Louis.

“At Nanci,” said André Desilles.

“Is it any steadier than it was?”

“I can do anything with my own company, in spite of Barbot; so can Peltier and Enjolras with theirs. The other companies are very doubtful; but our men are far better in hand than the Régiment Mestre-de-Camp. And Journiac de St. Meard is in trouble with the Swiss of Chateau Vieux? But what are the poor devils to do if you will not pay them? However, I will now go back and see what I can do. I wish to heaven that I could get them paid; they would follow me anywhere then.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE DOWAGER LADY SOMERS TO M. D'ISIGNY.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“To youth is given the privilege of pleasure; to a ripe and intellectual manhood such as your own, is given the privilege of social and political ambition; to old age is given the privilege of garrulity. I am going to use my privilege.

“We are much excited here by what we hear from your dear country—France. We are deeply distressed. It seems that you of our order in France are beginning to reap the fruits of a very long course of neglect of your peasantry and your town poor—as you have often pointed out to me.”

This was abrupt, but the fact was that Sir Lionel

was reading the letter as she wrote it, and stopped this very strenuous old lady from breaking any more windows.

“I, for my part, very much envy you the whirl and bustle of politics in which you seem entirely absorbed. I myself, as the intimate personal friend of Chatham, envy you. But it seems to me that you are looking for a statesman, and are not able to find one. M. Mirabeau, whom I *think* I may call friend, does not seem to understand the situation, and is, in fact, in opposition. M. Necker is a mere banker. What is wanted just now is a minister, who will repress and keep down the mob.

“We are extremely dull here, at Ashurst; and I fear it is duller still at Sheepsheden—if you ever, in the whirl of politics, remember such a place. Mathilde, who is as a daughter to me now, finds it, I fear, very dull there. She is utterly alone. When you gave your consent to the alliance between our families I was glad. I am glad no longer. I wish it consummated. There is nothing to prevent it. The poor child is in a false position. You have permitted us to announce the engage-

ment between her and Lionel, and yet he hardly likes to go there. I do earnestly beg that there may be a marriage. There is everything for it, and nothing against it.

“BARBARA SOMERS.”

D'Isigny, as was the nature of the man, began just where the old lady left off; and put his spoke in the wheel at once, leaving his garrulity to follow. Do any of my readers know a man who hates having anything *done* unless he does it himself? I know many. It is, however, more an English failing than a French one. But D'Isigny fitted with no party in France; and such decisive power of action as he had was merely physical. If he had been on the spot, with full powers of bullying everybody, he would have forced Sir Lionel to marry Mathilde at the sword's point immediately, would have posted to Lambeth for a special licence, for he dearly loved furious and unnecessary action. But this audacious proposal of having his daughter married to the man of her heart and the man of his choice, without his being present to bully them, was a matter which must be at once put

a stop to. He began, as I said, where the old lady left off.

“MADAM,

“With regard to your somewhat extraordinary proposal, that my daughter should consummate a marriage with your son, without the presence of her family, I beg to state that I must give a most *emphatic* refusal.

“I was under the impression hitherto that *the* D’Isignys drew their honours from even a purer source, could such a thing be, than the extremely doubtful one of the Cretin son of David Rizzio, the guitar player.”

He revelled over the last paragraph. There were plenty of r’s in it, and he burred them. He read it aloud to himself. He thought, should he have to finish Lady Somers face to face, where would he put his emphasis—R-r-izzio or C-r-r-etin? He tried guita-r-r, but that would not do; and Rizzio, as he said it, made a dactyl, whereas Cretin was a good spondee. Cretin was a withering word, *and* he determined to use it.

“The man was a fool,” says the reader. That is just the thing I am trying to prove. At the same time, not altogether such a fool as he looked. Mathilde was not only Mademoiselle D’Isigny of Sheepden, but she was sister to the Marquise de Valognes, with her immense territories. The consummation of the alliance with Sir Lionel Somers might wait a little. Who could say what might happen in this general overturn?

When he had got so far, he was so extremely pleased with himself that he got to a certain extent civil, and went on.

“Your ladyship is doubtless aware that I have been accustomed to be master in my own house. On this occasion, my dear madam, I must be allowed to use my old privilege, even at the expense of an apparent want of gallantry. It is impossible to say where any of us may find ourselves in a year. Mathilde may be the daughter of a ruined, possibly beheaded outcast. It is better to wait. The Revolutionists have thus early taken the very wise course of ruining the most eminent and to them the most dangerous men, and so my estates in

Brittany are laid waste. I am actually at this moment dependent on my wife's estate at Sheepsden for my personal expenditure.

“And again, is this a time for marrying or giving in marriage? You may say that it is right that my daughter should have a protector. She has one in you. Could she have a better one? No, my dear madam; this affair must be delayed.

“I met Brèze the other day, looking older, but well kept. He remembers you, and sends all kinds of compliments. Your old friend Bailly carries himself as well as ever; though not so young as he was, his carriage is still grand and graceful; certainly he stands on the finest leg I have ever seen. The King gets fat and sleepy, the Queen as radiant and brisk as ever. A sad thing about the little Dauphin, was it not? He was always a puling child, and *on dit* that they exhibited calomel when he had the catarrh on him,” etc., etc., etc.

Let the reader fill up this fiddle-faddle for himself. Lady Somers never read it fairly through. While D'Isigny was flattering himself that he had shown the old lady the perfect determi-

nation of his character, and then had charmed her into good humour by his fashionable and political babble, Lady Somers was rubbing her mittens together, and was saying to her son:—

“That future father-in-law of yours is a very remarkable man.”

Sir Lionel expressed a somewhat doubtful assent.

“It is all very well for you to be doubtful, but I tell you that he is a very remarkable man indeed. He is by far the vainest, shallowest, and emptiest person whom I have ever met in the whole course of my life.”

“My dearest mother!”

“My dearest son! I am very old, and not very wise, but he has written me the shallowest, falsest, flimsiest letter which I have ever received in my lifetime. Read it for yourself, and judge. When you, or I, or Mathilde write a letter with a purpose in it, we state that purpose: he never states it. His purpose is delay; why, I cannot conceive, because Mathilde is not likely to meet again with such a *parti* as you. He could not say so. Just examine that letter as a curiosity. Why, the man did not know what he was going to say when he

began writing it. And then, when he thinks that he has thoroughly deceived and dazzled me, he tries to come over me with his Brèzes and Baillys. It is absolutely impossible that Brèze, who is, I believe, Lord Chamberlain, or something of that sort, could ever have heard of me in his life. As for Bailly and his legs, I don't know his legs, because I never set eyes on them. That is the oldest trick known in society, that of trying to flatter a person by pretending to bring messages from eminent people whom they have never seen. And for him to try such a very old trick on such a very old woman as I am! Why, it is monstrous! He is not truthful, that man."

"My dear mother, I should have said that he was the soul of truth."

"He will not be to any one who will allow him to bully them," was all the answer Sir Lionel could get from his mother.

This letter came on Sunday morning.

"I shall not go to church this morning, my dear. I could not communicate after that letter. Stay you at home also, my dear, and read me the service."

Sir Lionel got his father's prayer-book, and pushed a chair opposite to his mother. He then found her her own prayer-book.

"Shall I ring for the servants," he said.

"No," she said; "you and I alone. And I am getting blind, and the print of this book is too small: and I am getting deaf, and cannot hear you where you sit; so come and sit on this stool at my feet, and I can look over your shoulder."

So Sir Lionel sat down before his mother, and leaned his head against her knee, while he read the Litany to her, as was his custom on the mornings when she could not go to church.

"There is nothing left," said the old lady at last, "but to wait. I should say no more. Submit."

END OF VOL. II.

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